

DOUALA UNDER THE
FRENCH MANDATE, 1916 TO 1936

BY

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Thesis submitted for the Degree of Ph.D.
at the University of London.

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ABSTRACT

Douala arose from the settlement founded by the Dualas beside the Wouri river estuary, initially called Cameroons. A fishing and farming community, the Dualas became successful palm produce traders with the Europeans in the 19th century. Then they were ruled by Germany from 1884 to 1914.

In the formative German period the Dualas showed their approach to European rule - collaboration aimed at seeking advantages, combined with criticism culminating in the protests against land expropriation effected in 1914 - which they continued after the First World War had led to French rule from 1916. There was widespread opposition to France initially, with calls for self-government. After 1920 this movement declined temporarily, but protests continued.

Douala was the main commercial centre of French Cameroun. Economic expansion provided many opportunities seized by Dualas, as traders and especially as cash crop planters. They served the French, to mutual advantage, as clerks. They extended their education further, mainly through the Protestant Mission which most followed. French policy reduced but did not eliminate their influence over non-Dualas.

Continued anti-colonialism was shown in the movement surrounding the independent Baptists; the movement for restoration of land expropriated in 1914; and active nationalism including approaches to the League of Nations (1929-32). The last phase coincided with the Depression.

Economic damage to Duala interests in the Depression was limited, but politically they were more subdued after 1932. They were then outnumbered by African immigrants. With the French at the height of their power, ruling through the Dualas' important traditional rulers and the Strangers' untraditional ones, Douala in 1936 exemplified a West African city at the zenith of colonialism.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	4
CHAPTER ONE: THE PRE-COLONIAL AND GERMAN PERIODS	20
CHAPTER TWO: THE DUALAS AND THE FRENCH, 1916 TO 1920; WAR, PEACE AND PROTEST	93
CHAPTER THREE: ACTION AND REACTION IN COMMERCE AND POLITICS, 1920 TO 1927	168
CHAPTER FOUR: NATIONALISM AND DEPRESSION, 1927 TO 1934	274
CHAPTER FIVE: DOUALA IN THE THIRTIES	376
Appendix: the Wouri Region food and income survey, 1938	436
List of sources and bibliography	
Maps	

PREFACE

In the study of Africa under colonial rule the history of a particular city has seldom been attempted so far. But the growth of cities was an important development in colonial Africa. While many cities had existed before, new ones were started then and all major cities became areas of particular colonial impact. Cities were centres of European commerce and administration in Africa, whose growth is illustrated in many ways by the study of urban development.

For the study of Africans living under colonial rule, to be distinguished from the study of colonial rule in Africa, it is particularly useful to examine how Africans lived in the areas which, on the whole, became the most westernised, the furthest from traditional life, in the various colonies. A particularly large and varied set of new opportunities for Africans was available from an early date in the towns, and their responses are an important subject for research.

For recent urban history material is so abundant that the development of a large city over the whole 60-80-year period of colonial rule is too large a subject for a thesis. This one eventually had to cover only twenty years. The colonial archives contain plenty of material on the main European centres in the colonies. So do the published and unpublished documents of Missions, while in the many cities where literate Africans were concentrated from an early date, as well as European settlers, there are newspapers going back to the early

colonial period. Above all there are many informants available.

The field for research on an African urban community in the colonial era was therefore wide when I began research on the subject. I eventually chose the example of Douala, which turned out to be a particularly happy choice. Typical in some ways of major West African seaports, it is also unique in the history of the reaction of its founding inhabitants, the Dualas, to colonial rule, on which almost no research has been done. Few other cities, probably, would have offered such a valuable new insight into African reactions to European rule, including early political activity almost unrecorded in published works.

The period of the study was narrowed down to the inter-war period, which for French Cameroun was the Mandate period. The post-war period, in which Douala was a centre of great political activity on which there are superabundant records, is for that reason alone a sufficient topic for a thesis in itself, and Dr. R.A. Joseph's thesis for Oxford University on post-war Cameroun nationalism (now published by OUP as Radical Nationalism in Cameroun) uses a considerable amount of the material on Douala in that period. The pre-1914 period could not be studied without full examination of the colonial archives of the German government of Kamerun (which, however, have yielded plenty of material on Douala used in Kamerun under Deutscher Kolonialherrschaft, ed. H. Stöcker). This would have been considerably less easy for me than the study of the French Mandate period.

The study of the French Mandate period turned out

to be very rewarding. The scarcely studied but well documented anti-colonial activity of the Dualas, just mentioned, was in the 1920s and 1930s. On many aspects of the history of Douala in the Mandate years, besides that one, material turned out to be abundant, and useful for addition to knowledge of the Africans' role in the period of secure and established colonial rule. That period is perhaps less studied than both the period of colonisation and that of decolonisation. But the reactions of Africans at the time when European rule must have seemed eternal are of particular interest. Besides the political protests, the documents on Douala showed that there was a remarkable exploitation of the opportunities of their new situation by the Dualas, including a large-scale establishment of cash crop plantations which has hardly been studied hitherto.

There is also material on the immigration of Africans from other areas, a major theme of sociological and geographical studies of African cities since the Second World War; such studies have covered many cities, including Ibadan, Freetown, Kampala, Jos, Brazzaville, Dakar and Douala. The influx began well before the Second World War, if on a smaller scale, and this can be illustrated by the example of Douala.

Some aspects of the growth of a major seaport are easily traced through documents on shipping, harbour works, railway traffic to and from the port, and imports and exports. The effect of the Great Depression, so important for all of Africa, is well documented for a town like Douala.

Thus a comprehensive picture of the growth of the town, both the commercial and political activities of the Africans and the background of steady development as a colonial commercial centre, can be constructed for the Mandate period. I decided to construct such a picture in a small but comprehensive historical monograph. In Cameroun, as in other African countries, monographs on the colonial impact and African reactions in a number of selected areas have been made, including some historical studies of cities; there are unpublished dissertations on Nkongsamba (by Bernard Nkuissi, for the University of Lille) and on Kribi (by Jean-Marie Essomba, for the University of Cameroon). Much can be learned from comparison of such geographically confined studies.

Neither a simple study of political movements, nor a thematic approach with those movements singled out in one chapter, seemed possible. Among the small communities of educated coastal Africans who were prominent in early nationalism, like the Dualas, such activity was inseparable from their activities and achievements in business, religion and office employment -- and, in the case of the Dualas, in cash crop farming. To concentrate exclusively on the political protests of a community of clerks, businessmen, clergymen, landlords and planters would give a distorted view of such a community. So, in a way, would a series of thematic chapters on "the economy", "the Missions", "protest activity", etc. All these aspects of life were simultaneous and intermingled; the people under study passed continually between their houses, their offices, their shops, their plantations, their churches and their political

meetings. It gives a more accurate picture, and involves fewer and more manageable cross-references, to deal with all these aspects of life in chronological chapters covering a few years each.

However, in the chronological chapters certain aspects of the history of Douala which turned out to be more prominent or better documented at a certain time are described in connection with that time but with reference to earlier and later years.

The chapters are based, except for the first, on the major episodes of African, mainly Duala, reactions to the colonial situation, which are the main continuous theme--though fitted always into the general urban social background--of the thesis. The first chapter is a necessary introduction on the pre-colonial and German periods. These were so important for what happened later that they have to be covered at length even without the aid of German archives which still need to be used for a fuller study, to supplement Stöcker's work, of the thirty years of German rule in Douala. Douala underwent so many formative influences in those thirty years, and this so much affected their later development under French rule, that they must be studied in some detail, though less than in the main body of the thesis.

The later chapters centre around African reactions to French rule, including the early attempted challenge to the partition of German Kamerun;

participation of Africans in the economic development of Douala; the Native Baptist Church and the movement in support of it; the revival of the land case started by the German expropriation in 1914; and the period of intense anti-colonial protests leading to protests to the League of Nations. Each episode is described in relation to other initiatives and activities, African and French.

Many episodes are of such interest for Cameroonian and wider African history that I decided to deal with them at length: the Native Baptist Church movement, the land claim (though a good deal of material on that had to be left unused for the present), and the 1929-31 protest activity. The thesis is, basically, the study of these episodes, around which the history of the growth of Douala over twenty years is constructed.

After the failure of the Dualas' protests in the early 1930s a sort of compromise between them and the French is discernible. The thesis ends by studying this, as signifying the peak of colonial rule in a city whose people had been particularly unwilling to submit to it. Around 1936 Douala was typical in many ways of a major African commercial city at the time which was generally the zenith of colonialism. The political turbulence of earlier years made the relative quiescence of that time seem striking, though the situation in many other African colonies was comparable. In many parts of West African and some other parts of the continent the 1920s saw a large amount of active anti-colonialism, and the 1930s a relative lull in such activity.

This was true of Douala, though the lull in 1932-36 was only relative and the last chapter of the thesis mentions the continuation of some anti-colonial activity. There is some convenience in stopping the present study before the small beginnings of the new and ultimately successful urban-based anti-colonial movements which in many places, Douala included, were discernible--if only in embryo--in the later 1930s.

The unavailability, at the time of my research, of Cameroon official archives after 1932 is an additional reason for not studying in detail the political events of subsequent years, on which, I have since been informed, abundant material has since been opened up at the Yaounde Archives. Although at the time of my research the French Colonial Ministry archives in Paris had been thrown open until 1942-3, the amount of material on French Cameroun in the 1930s in those archives was limited. No topics could therefore be studied in sufficient detail after 1932. However, I had a good deal of non-archival material on Duala society and daily life relating to the early 1930s, including contemporary newspapers and the unexpected find of an isolated archival document on voluntary associations; so these were used in a final, rounding-off chapter going up roughly to 1936.

The ending of the study in 1936 is not wholly satisfactory; it was not the original intention. The year 1941 would have been the ideal cutting-off date. Then the decline of the older generation of leaders of the Duala community, widely involved in the protests of the Mandate

period, which had already begun in the 1930s was completed in a "purge" following the Free French occupation of French Cameroun in 1940. At the same time the important plantations of the Dualas, possibly also in decline even before then and certainly less important relatively for exports in the 1930s than earlier, were hit by a final disaster when the war virtually ended exports of their cocoa and palm products.

These events were turning points, all the more so as the situation was different beyond recognition after the end of the Second World War. The hard obligation to make a choice of periods for concentrated attention was the main reason for not looking at those events in this thesis; when such a choice has to be made the least documented period (as far as available documents, not closed, are concerned) must go. It is now possible for another researcher to examine what must be very plentiful and interesting archival material on the years 1936 to 1946.

Thus narrowed down to a twenty-year period (1916 to 1936), the study of the history of Douala could proceed with not much concern about ground already covered in published works. Almost none deal with Douala at any length. But there is one book which must be noted. Research on the history of Douala was done over many years, using official archives, by René Gouellain, a French sociologist who in 1956 produced an important study of New-Bell, in Douala, for the French colonial (Trusteeship) government. Later he wrote an extensive thesis under the auspices of ORSTOM, which he kindly let me read in Paris in 1971.

In 1975 it was published, with some alterations, in Paris, by the Institut d'Ethnologie of the Musée de l'Homme, as Douala: Ville et Histoire.

While I acknowledge the great value of this work for my own research, as well as M. Gouellain's help to me, I saw early on that his research left plenty of room for more. His approach, perhaps because it is sociological, omits a great deal of important historical detail. It consists of a generalised description of the Africans, above all the Dualas, and their colonial rulers based on the use of numerous archives and other documents, but omitting very many others which the author did not see. It is also brief on the Mandate period, compared with the periods before 1914 and after 1945. For these reasons it only covers a small part of the ground covered in my thesis.

The political protest activity and the independent church agitation are hardly covered at all in Gouellain's study; the Missions are scarcely mentioned, and there is no close look at the lives of individuals. The last named gap, in fact, is the most important. Hardly a single proper name appears in the book and the Africans scarcely emerge as individuals. These may not be defects in a study of a different nature to mine and under a different discipline, but they leave plenty of room for historical research.

M. Gouellain found a number of important archival documents which I did not; I therefore cite his quotations of them many times. Far more numerous, however, are sources which I found in addition to those which he cited. I am therefore in the double-edged position of having to acknowledge my debt to that other researcher but also to

assert confidently that his work has left much still to be investigated in the history of Douala under the Mandate. Gouellain's earlier study of New-Bell is a much more detailed contribution to history, but to the history of post-Second World War Douala mainly, its section on earlier history covering much of the same ground as the later book.

Published books on Cameroon (see Bibliography), and those on Africa with extensive sections on Cameroon, naturally mention Douala frequently, but none have made more than the briefest allusions to the events studied in this thesis. This is true of works from R.L. Buell's The Native Problem in Africa (1928) to W. Johnson's The Cameroon Federation (1964). Some articles have appeared on certain aspects or episodes, such as those of Owona, Joseph and Ghomsî listed in the Bibliography. But most of the material has been hardly touched by academic works apart from those of Gouellain.

Published original documents are numerous. Because of French Cameroun's Mandated Territory status the Annual Reports to the league of Nations were a valuable source. So were the Reports of the Permanent Mandates Commission meetings at Geneva. I read the Annual Reports in the Rhodes House Library, Oxford, and the PMC Reports in the Documentation Française Overseas Section (CEDAOM) Library in Paris. Even more valuable was the ordinary government gazette, the *Journal Officiel du Cameroun*; simply reading this from cover to cover provided plenty of information. It is in the Library of the Archives Nationales, Section Outremer, Paris, housed in the former offices of the Ministry of the Colonies, 27 rue Oudinot. Some writings by French officials on Cameroun

at that time were almost official documents, such as Territoires Africains sous Mandat de la France: Cameroun et Togo by V. Chazelas (1931) and, still less distinguishable from an official French government publication, L'Oeuvre de la France au Cameroun, ed. P. Chauleur (1936).

The Société des Missions Evangéliques of Paris, which had the most important Mission in Douala, published a Journal des Missions Evangéliques which I read fruitfully at the Society's headquarters. In Paris, also, at the headquarters of the French province of the Holy Ghost Fathers, the Bulletin de la Congrégation du Saint-Esprit and the Chronique des Missions published by the order provided information on that order's Mission in French Cameroun, less important for Douala than the French Protestant Mission. I must here thank the Rev. Kruger, of the SME, and Père Bernard Noël, CSSp, for access to those two libraries.

The Bulletin of the Chamber of Commerce of French Cameroun has plenty of information from its first issue in 1927. Almost all volumes are in the library of the Chamber at Douala, where I was able to read them by kind permission of M. Marcel Tricou.

Of the contemporary newspapers, almost all copies of L'Eveil du Cameroun from 1928 to 1955 (after which the newspaper continued under the name of La Presse du Cameroun until 1974) are preserved in the attic of the Centre Culturel Français library in Douala, whose staff I must thank for permission to read them (and the use of a ladder to reach them). Other newspapers had to be found in archives, which have incomplete collections of them. The Colonial Ministry and

Holy Ghost Fathers archives in Paris, and the newspaper library of the Bibliothèque Nationale there, had between them most copies of the short-lived L'Eveil des Camerouniens; the Yaounde archives had most of those of La Gazette du Cameroun and some of Mbale. The Bibliothèque Nationale newspaper library had a few other scattered copies of French Cameroun newspapers of the period. I express thanks for permission to use that library and that of the Documentation Française/^{overseas}section (CEDAOM) in Paris, and the Rhodes House Library in Oxford.

The two main French government archives with material on French Cameroun were the Archives Nationales Section Outremer, Paris, already mentioned; and the Cameroon National Archives at Yaounde. I must express my thanks to M. Carlo Laroche for access to the rue Oudinot archives, and to M. Marc Etende, Father Engelbert Mveng and M. Adalbert Owona for access to the Yaounde Archives. The staff of both were very helpful. I must pay particular tribute to the efficient organisation of the Cameroon Archives, where any file took only a few minutes to find.

A forty-year rule was strictly enforced at the Yaounde Archives in 1972 (there was just one case of a document accidentally straying from the closed period into a file open for research). I was unable, very regrettably, to do further research on subsequent brief visits.

As noted earlier, a thirty-year rule was introduced for the Colonial Ministry archives in Paris shortly before my first research work there (that was in 1971). Even in 1973, probably because the classification of documents newly thrown open had not been completed, the number of documents concerning

French Cameroun which were available for the Mandate period was limited--previously there had been a fifty-year rule.

I was not able to see the archives of the Société des Missions Evangéliques. Those of the Holy Ghost Fathers were made available until 1927, with very full co-operation from Père Noël, but they were not able to reveal much about Douala, except for the series of Etats Statistiques Annuels made available for years up to the 1940s.

The libraries of ORSTOM (Organisation de la Recherche Scientifique et Technique Outre-Mer) in Paris and Yaounde had some useful published material, but the research findings from work under the auspices of ORSTOM relate mainly to the Trusteeship period. However, at the Yaounde ORSTOM library I found some isolated files whose presence was unexplained; they had apparently strayed from the archives, being official documents of the 1930s relating to Douala. It was a valuable unexpected find.

Records of the United Africa Co.'s component firm at Douala, R. & W. King (a major firm there for over a century), were made available to me by kindness of Miss C. Elgaard of UAC. Other company records were used extensively by Sir Frederick Pedler in his history of UAC, The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa.

In Douala there are many unpublished historical works, because of the great interest in local history there; some are in Duala, some in French. I must thank the authors of those manuscripts for my being able to read them. The full titles are in the bibliography; the authors to whom I acknowledge thanks are Léopold Moume Etia, Maurice Doumbe-Moulongo, Albert Mod'a Bebe Bell, Albert Mpondo Dika,

Pierre Penda and Bruno Ditourou Eyoum. M. Moume Etia has since published one or two of the small MSS that I saw.

Two non-Cameroonian historians also helped me by showing me unpublished material on Douala: Dr. Ralph Austen (Slavery among the Duala of Cameroon) and Pastor Jean-René Brutsch (a list of pastors and leading Christians of Douala). I record my thanks to them, with sadness in the case of Pastor Brutsch because of his tragic death of which I heard the year after I met him in Geneva.

A special word of acknowledgment is due to René Douala Manga Bell, Paramount Chief of the Bonadoo, for permission to use his extensive private papers, full of information on the affairs of the Bonadoo and particularly on their land case. The Paramount Chief showed me every kindness and hospitality also. Others who let me see their private papers were Johannes Sam Deido and Léopold Moume Etia.

Personal interviews were a rewarding exercise. People were very willing to accord them and told a great deal. For the few who did not know French interpreters were easily found. A list of informants is at the end of the thesis. I must thank them all profoundly, and record my regret that some have died since then--Betote Akwa, Ekwalla Essaka, Goethe George, Ekal'a Pidi, Albert Mpondo Dika, Michel Epee, Emmanuel Mambo Manga Bell.

I conducted field-work in Cameroon, all in Douala apart from consulting of the Archives in Yaounde, from January to July 1972. Later I did more archival research in Paris, with a few interviews. After 1973 I was unfortunately prevented by pressure of work from completing the thesis before 1978.

I thank the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, for the indulgence shown to my long delay in presenting the thesis, as well as for sponsoring and helping my work from the beginning in 1970. I acknowledge my debt particularly to my Supervisor, Dr. Richard Rathbone; to Professor Roland Oliver, Head of the Department of the History of Africa at the SOAS; to Dr. Humphrey Fisher and Mr. Douglas Jones of that Department; and to their colleagues who helped me in various ways.

For two years I received a grant from the Social Science Research Council in London for the work. I express my warmest gratitude for this help, which was extended to cover the air fare to and from Cameroon in 1972.

Besides the staff of the SOAS many academic colleagues helped me in the course of the work. Besides M. Gouellain, Dr. Austen and M. Owona, already mentioned, I also thank Professor R.J. Gavin, Head of the History Department at the University of Ilorin, Nigeria; Dr. Richard Joseph, to whom I owe many sorts of thanks; and Professor Raphaël Onambele, Professor Yves Person, Professor Hubert Deschamps, M. Claude Meillassoux, M. Claude Tardits, Dr. Martin Njeuma, Père Eric de Rosny, M. Manga Bekombo, M. Robert Cornevin, Herr Hans Wilhelm and Prince Dika Akwa.

In countless other ways many people helped me to complete the work through hospitality, kindness and aid especially in Cameroon in 1972, but also down to the time of final presentation in 1978. I cannot name them all but they start with my wife, Mrs. Xavérie Derrick née Ngokobla, a Bassa of Nkondjock (Pouma). They also include: Achidi

Ndifang, Jean-Emile Mba, Maurice Moumy, Wilfred Mbellem, Peter Ngu, Marie Ebah, Bernard Mang, Dierk Lange, Michka Sachnine, Richard Modi, Françoise Diffoum, Valère Epee, Elisabeth Kingue, Jean-Paul Nyounaé-Libam, Raph Uwechue, Marie-Claude Céleste, Père Meinrad Hebga, Victor Ndiba, Jacques de Lestapis, Albert Elmaleh, John Ndahne, Nicole Bell, Jacques Weber, Abodel Karimou, Mrs. Susan Soyinka, Dr. Sammy Chumbow, Mrs. Joyce Ayinmodu, and the typists of the thesis. To all I express my heartfelt thanks.

CHAPTER ONE

THE PRE-COLONIAL AND GERMAN PERIODS

Douala lies on the banks of the estuary of the Wouri river in Cameroon, at latitude $4^{\circ}03'N$. and longitude $9^{\circ}41'E$. The Wouri, a relatively small river, broadens at the site of Douala into a wide estuary which affords one of the best natural harbours on the West coast of Africa. Along both shores of the estuary are dense mangrove swamps interspersed with creeks. The southern shore passes Cape Malimba, the mouth of the Dibamba river, and Manoka Bay, which is connected by creeks amid mangrove swamps with the mouth of the river Sanaga, the longest river entering the Atlantic between the Niger and the Congo. The exit of the estuary into the ocean is 10 miles wide, with Cape Suellaba on the southern side and Cape Cameroon on the northern; close by is the roadstead of Suellaba. The maze of creeks and swamps along the coast stretches northeastwards from the Wouri estuary to the river Mungo, which enters the sea near Cape Cameroon, and beyond to Cape Nachtigal and Ambas Bay. The latter bay is near the foothills of the great volcano Mount Cameroon (13,352 ft.), terminal and culminating peak of the major mountain range in West Africa.

The Wouri estuary was called by the Portuguese navigators who visited it about 1472 the rio dos Camarões after the crayfish or camarões found there. The name became Cameroons in English and for centuries British navigators, traders and cartographers called the estuary the Cameroons

River. The town which grew up by the estuary was also called Cameroons, which became Cameroun in French and Kamerun in German. This name was extended later, first by the Germans, to the large area inland from the estuary conquered by them after 1884. The settlement which had grown up on the banks of the "Cameroons River" was then renamed after the Duala people inhabiting it, and this name has remained*.

The Dualas, a Bantu people, are believed to have come from the Congo in the 17th century, to find the Bassa people, also Bantu but not closely related, in possession of the Wouri estuary. The Dualas are among the offshoots of a group of migrants who on arrival in the coastal area of modern Cameroon split into several groups now living between Amba Bay and the Campo river.

The Dualas are the largest tribe of this group, whose other members are reckoned by traditions and studies (which differ, however, on some details)¹, to be the Limba (Malimba, Balimba); the Wuri or Oli, upstream of the Dualas along the Wouri river**; the Mongo, around the

* Modern British and French practice uses the spelling "Duala" for the tribe, the IAI spelling, and "Douala" for the city, a practice followed in this thesis.

** The different spellings "Wouri" and "Wuri" are used in the same way as the spellings "Douala" and "Duala."

1. E. Ardener, Coastal Bantu of the Cameroons; I. Dugast, Inventaire Ethnique du Sud-Cameroun, 1949, Mémoires de l'IFAN Centre du Cameroun, Série "Population", no. I; R. Bureau, "Ethno-Sociologie Religieuse des Dualas et Apparentés", Recherches et Etudes Camerounaises 1962, parts I & 2; "Esquisse Ethnologique" in Bulletin de la Société d'Etudes Camerounaises no. 3, 1943; M. Doumbe-Mouloungou, "Origines et Migrations des Dualas", Abbia, Yaounde, June 1968, p. 79ff.; M. Doumbe-Mouloungou, Les Dualas du Cameroun, unpublished MS.

lower reaches of the river of the same name, which however is usually written Mungo; the Bakweri or Kpe, between Amba Bay and the lower slopes of Mount Cameroon nearby; the Kole and the Isuwu (Isibu), on the coast between the Mungo River and Amba Bay; the Batanga, around modern Kribi south of the Sanaga and Nyong river mouths; the Pongo, living along the lower Mungo; and the Mboko, Banoh, Bapuko and Yasa. They all speak closely related languages of Guthrie's Bantu Zone "A"². Other tribes included in the family by tradition³ are the Bojongo and Jebale, near neighbours of the Dualas, the Bojongo living next to them on the right bank of the Wouri and the Jebale on an island of the same name in the Wouri just above Duala territory; the Abo, between the Wouri and Mungo rivers; and the Pongo-Songo and Dibongo, on the lower Sanaga near Edea.

The total population of the group may not be more than 50,000. Of these the Dualas proper may account for half, while some of the other tribes are very small. The Dualas have over the centuries become the dominant tribe in the group, because of their numbers, their economic and social position, and particularly their role in trade with Europeans and the development of their language by missionaries. The Dualas feel a close affinity with other tribes of the group and call the whole group Sawa. Other Sawa tribes are strongly influenced by the Dualas and their language and many prominent Duala people have originated from one or other

2. Ardener, op.cit., p.33.

3. Doumbe-Mouloungou, "Origines et Migrations...", p.80; Les Dualas, p. 86ff.

of those tribes.

All the Sawa peoples appear to agree on descent from a common eponymous ancestor named Mbongo, and most from his son Mbedi. The Dualas bear the name of Ewale, son of Mbedi. Duala traditions say that the originally united band of migrating ancestors began to split up about the time they reached the coast. Ewale and Bojongo, one of his brothers, led their followers to the lower Wouri, where both bought land from the Bassas there; thus the settlement of Ewale's people, the Dualas, was founded.⁴

The original inhabitants of what is now Douala were the Bassas. They occupy almost all the country, low-lying in the west and hilly in the east and all thickly forested, between the modern Douala and Yaounde. Those living between the Wouri and the lower Sanaga are sometimes called Bakoko or Baso, and some have considered them to be distinct from the Bassas; the distinction was normally made in French official documents in the period under study. But they are generally held to be a part of the same people, descended from a common ancestor.⁵

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4. *ibid.*; and traditions summarised in R. Gouellain, Douala: Ville et Histoire, p. 20ff., and Bureau, *op.cit.* p.25ff. There are several variations in the traditional accounts, as recorded in modern works, of the relationships of the Sawa tribes and their migrations.
 5. Gouellain, *op.cit.*, quoting traditions recounted by S. Mpouma, H. Moussongo and L.M. Pouka; P. Penda, Histoire et Coutumes du Peuple Bassa, unpublished MS, Douala

The Dualas before colonial rule

The Dualas and related tribes were traditionally fishermen and farmers. Their area of rivers, creeks and swamps was good for fishing, for which they had and still have outlying camps called kombo, some permanent, some transitory⁶. Crops grown by the Dualas and other tribes in the area include in particular the yam, cocoyam, plantain, cowpea, and banana; the valuable oil palm with all its useful products, palm oil, palm kernels, palm fronds, palm wine; the coconut palm; and the vegetables and fruits introduced into West Africa from the 15th century, usually from the New World: cassava, maize, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, pawpaws, mangoes and avocado pears.

Among traditional crafts boat building and particularly the carving of canoe figureheads were well developed by the Dualas. In later years, at least, they also developed ivory carving.

Traditions differ as to where exactly the Dualas and Bojongos first settled by the Wouri⁷. After the first settlement, probably before 1650, the Dualas were united under Ewale and his successors. After the reign of one later ruler, Doo, it seems to be agreed that there was a separation of some sort between the Dualas on the left and on the right bank, with Bele succeeding his father Doo on the left bank and Mbape, another son, on the right. Mbape's people took the name of Mbedi, transformed into

6. Bureau, op.cit., p.41-2; T. Monod, L'Industrie des Pêches au Cameroun, p.118ff.

7. Gouellain, op.cit., p.70.

Beri, and were thus called Bonaberi (bona = "the people of ..."). Bele's people on the left bank were called Doo-Doo or Bonadoo after Doo. Bonaberi's use of the ancestor's name would seem to indicate a claim to seniority, and such a claim seems to have been accepted because the ruler of Bonadoo was crowned by that of Bonaberi under a historic baobab tree on the right bank, the Bongongi ba Belle Belle⁸. But the Bonadoo seem to have become effectively more powerful. The separation of the two for most practical purposes had become established by the 19th century. At some point, perhaps from the start, Bonaberi ruled over Bojongo; while from the time of Bele the Bonadoo ruled over the Bonapriso, descendants of Priso, an elder brother of Bele excluded from the succession, and his followers⁹. Bele was succeeded by his son, Bebe, and he by his son, Lob'a Bebe.

The territory ruled by Bele and his two immediate successors came to be called "Bell", after Bele, by the British traders now frequenting the Cameroons River. The British also called these rulers "King", and the title was adopted unchanged into Duala. From Lob'a Bebe onwards, the British called the left bank Duala ruler "King Bell," as a transferable title like "Pharaoh" in the Bible.

In the time of Bele there was a rebellion leading to the secession of an area on the left bank called Bonambela or Bonaku or, in the anglicised version of the

8. Interview, Louis Mbappe, Douala 1972

9. Interview, Rodolphe Doumbe-Mouloby, Douala

latter which came to be adopted, "Akwa". The name Bonaku comes from Ku or Nku; varying accounts agree on a partly Bassa origin, through him, for the Akwa Dualas or their rulers¹⁰. It was Ngando a'Kwa, grandson or great-grandson of Ku, who led the rebellion of some Dualas on the left bank against their ruler Bele. The date is uncertain but by the time of the Dualas' first treaty with the British, in 1840, Ngando a'Kwa was an independent equal of the Bonadoo ruler. The British called him and his successors "King Akwa". Akwa lay upstream from Bonadoo/Bell territory, with a small stream, the Beseke, forming the border. In the 19th century, British writers spoke of "King Bell's Town" or, later, simply "Bell".

Upstream from Akwa, another area rebelled, later in the 19th century, and became separate under the name of Bonebela. Further upstream still, on the left bank, was territory ruled by Akwa until today and called North Akwa. According to one tradition, the founder of Bonebela was Ebele, son of an Abo hostage, taken in a war fought over payment of tolls to Duala chiefs by traders from the interior, and a North Akwa mother¹¹. After its secession, Bonebela came to be known as Deido (also spelt Dido or Daido). One tradition says this name came from a

10. Doumbe-Mouloungou, Les Dualas, p.78-83; Gouellain, op.cit. p.70; J-P. Nyounaé-Libam, "Le Traité Douala-Allemand", in la Presse du Cameroun, Douala, 15 July and 22 July 1971.

11. Interview, Doumbe-Moulouby, Douala

British warship named Dido; another, that it came from the Pidgin phrase "dat do!" uttered by traders during the weighing of produce¹².

So, at the time of the colonial annexation in 1884, the Dualas were effectively divided into four units:

Bonadoo (Bell)

Bonaku (Akwa)

Bonebela (Deido)

Bonaberi (Hickory)

The name "Hickory", of unknown origin, was applied to Bonaberi but is no longer in use. The other three anglicised names are still used today.

The Dualas, their Slaves and their Neighbours.

Under the rulers mentioned above, the Duala community acquired wealth and influence through trade with Europeans. The prevailing influence of Portugal was succeeded by that of the Dutch and then the British. Cameroons came under strong British influence from the 18th century, after which its history was for long closely parallel to that of Old Calabar or the Niger Delta trading states. Pidgin became a general commercial language in all these places. In the 18th century they were important above all for the slave trade, of which Britain had the largest share then. The Dualas were important exporters of slaves,

12. Interview, Johannes Sam Deido, Douala.

though less so, possibly, than the Efiks and Ijaws¹³; in addition they kept many themselves.

The dominant position of the Dualas over many neighbouring peoples, and their enslavement of some of them, have been studied in some detail¹⁴. Besides Sawa people, others less closely related have been absorbed into the Duala community. There is a Bassa element in that community; the partial Bassa origin of the Akwas has been noted, and several Duala groups are said to be of mainly Bassa origin: the Bonasama and Bonamatumbe in Bonaberi, the Bonabeyike and Bonangang in North Akwa. Unabsorbed Bassa communities live near the Dualas' territory, and further away from the river, on the left bank, the Bell and Akwa "Kings" had extensive influence over the Bakoko and other peoples by the 19th century. By then, trade in palm products was replacing the slave trade; the Duala rulers acquired considerable control over the trade, in which imported European goods were exchanged for palm oil and kernels.

In addition, the Dualas established, often some distance from their own settlements by the river, farms run by slaves, called koto, belonging to Bell or Akwa Dualas¹⁵.

13. R. Austen, Slavery among the Duala of Cameroon, unpublished MS, p.16-17.

14. Austen, op.cit.; A. Wirz, Vom Sklavenhandel zum Kolonialenhandel: Wirtschaftsraume und Wirtschaftsformen in Kamerun vor 1914, Zurich 1972.

15. Austen, op.cit., p.7,10

Thus the Dualas' control extended some way inland from the estuary. The non-Dualas ruled informally by them acted as their middlemen for buying slaves and, later, produce. The informal influence zone of Akwa extended generally to the east of Cameroons, that of Bell to the north, in the 19th century¹⁶. A slave either purchased or captured from another tribe was called mukom; the Dualas had other terms for "slave" also¹⁷. Many slaves were taken as prisoners or war indemnity, in the frequent wars among Dualas or between them and other tribes, often fought over trade routes. Slaves were sometimes used as soldiers; others were used as canoe crews and many, as noted, as farm labourers. The least fortunate, with those sold to Europeans, were those offered as human sacrifices¹⁸. The placing of human beings in pawn as debt security was common, a pawn (dumba) being originally a free man¹⁹. All this resembled common pre-colonial West African custom.

Thus the Dualas' territory in the 19th century
koto farms as well as the main Cameroons settlement. The origin of the
 included the koto and other slaves is a subject which
 cannot be discussed here, but a word on the hinterland
 peoples with whom the Dualas had contact from early times
 is necessary as they were important in Douala's history.

Besides the important Bassa people, they include the related Bandem, who at an early date founded an

16. Austen, op.cit., p.10

17. ibid., P.3-4

18. ibid., p.14

19. ibid., p. 16-17

important trading settlement on the Wouri, Yabassi; the Banen, east of them; and, west of the Wouri, peoples on the slopes of the important mountain chain including high peaks such as Manengoumba and Koupe: the Bakaka, in and around the modern Nkongsamba; the Mbo, south of them; and south of the Mbo the Balong, approaching Sawa territory.

Further north, on the same mountain slopes, are a far more important ethnic group, collectively called Bamileke. Classed as "semi-Bantu" like their important neighbours (to the NE) the Bamoun, the Bamilekes are traditionally divided into over 90 chiefdoms. As their homeland is a savanna area, they have often been called by the English word "Grassfields", even by non-English-speakers, and the word was adopted into Duala as grafi. West of the Bamilekes, on the other side of the mountain, are a variety of related peoples, one of whose languages, Bali, became widely spoken. Both those peoples and the Bamilekes exported many slaves in the 18th and 19th centuries, via Calabar or Cameroons²⁰. Dualas had Bamileke domestic slaves also and even today a Duala can still insult a Bamileke by calling him a mukom'a grafi.

With the Bamilekes and Bassas, the most important inland people affecting the history of Douala have been the Betis: the Ewondo, Bane and Eton tribes, living east of the Bassas and related to the Fang people of Gabon. The Ewondo are the most important and their

20. *ibid.*, p.20

language has spread among the group and beyond. The name of the Ewondo people was given, in altered form, to the town founded in their area and now the Cameroon capital, Yaounde; since then Betis are commonly called "Yaounde people".

Related to the Beti and Fang peoples are the Boulou tribe, living south of the Betis, and the smaller Ngoumba tribe, living between the Boulous and the coastal Batanga.

Traditional Duala Society

The Dualas are a patrilineal people whose basic kinship units were the eboko, an extended polygamous household of one free man, possibly including his uterine brothers and sisters, and some of the older generation before him, as well as wives, children and slaves; and the mboa, a group of the beboko formed by the sons of a deceased eboko head²¹. As an eboko expanded to become an mboa all sons inherited the deceased head's property, but it seems his eldest son by his principal wife, or perhaps the eldest son of an mboa head by his principal wife, was head of the mboa²².

Several mboa units formed a dio la mboa. This was an important unit as it was at that level that land was held and distributed. Perhaps for that reason heads of dio la mboa units became important chiefs in the 19th

21. Gouellain, op.cit., p.82ff

22. Bureau, op.cit., p.60ff. But there is some obscurity about this.

century produce trade, and in the colonial era became the chefs de quartier still ruling today²³. The lineage or ndambia, comprising several dio la mboa, seems to have become less important in modern times. But by 1884 the Dualas had four maximal lineages, tumba la mboa, which still continue, their heads being the "Kings" or "Faramount Chiefs".

Duala society was divided into slaves, already described, and free men, wonja. Of the two main occupations, farming was largely left to slaves while fishing was considered the work of the free men²⁴. Crayfish catching was a special event different from ordinary fishing. The crayfish or mbeatoe swarmed in the estuary every three or four years. They were caught in the evening by free men (no women or slaves allowed) who rushed into the water carrying baskets, from sandbanks just upstream from the main Cameroons settlement²⁵. This festival was connected with the belief in semi-human seadwelling beings called miengu (sing. jengu). Jebale Island was supposed to be one of the homes of these mythical creatures, whose influence was believed to be great. In the 19th century the jengu cult was the basis of a secret society of free men with several executive and judicial functions²⁶.

Besides believing in supernatural beings like the miengu and the spirits of ancestors (bedimo) Dualas had the normal African monotheism with a belief in a remote supreme God, Loba²⁷. This was the word later used for God

23. Gouellain, op.cit., p.90-91.

24. Austen, op.cit., p.11.

25. Monod, op.cit., p.118ff.; Bureau, op.cit., p.106ff.

26. Bureau, loc.cit.; E. de Rosny, Ndims, Yaounde 1974, p.211ff.

27. Bureau, op.cit., p.65

by Christian missionaries.

Belief in witchcraft was prevalent and still continues. One particular belief is in ekong, the power of certain people to transform a man, after he has been killed, into a half-human being who will be sold to someone to work for him secretly at a distant place. The place is often identified by Dualas and Bassas as Mount Koupe, but the belief has been credibly derived from the slave trade²⁸. The healer, mot'a bwanga, was important in traditional Duala life.

The British and the Dualas

British trade relations were very important for the Dualas from the latter 18th century, when British traders at the Cameroons River began to buy palm oil and ivory even before the abolition of the slave trade. The abolition in 1807 was not effective immediately but very nearby the British government established its base at Fernando Po in 1827, partly to suppress slave trading; the island was virtually British-ruled though belonging to Spain, and an English-speaking colony of freed slaves grew up at Clarence (Santa Isabel). British warships from there visited Cameroons from 1840 and so, later, did the Consuls for the Bights of Benin and Biafra based at Clarence from 1849. The slave trade probably declined, for reasons other than the Consuls' efforts, at a fairly early stage in Cameroons.²⁹

28. de Rosny, op.cit., p.43ff.; Bureau, op.cit., p.140ff.

29. Austen, op.cit., pp.16-18

By the 1830s John Lilley, first known British resident among the Dualas, was a flourishing palm oil trader there. Other traders, unlike Lilley who was said to live in chiefly style with several wives, traded from hulks moored in the estuary. R. & W. King may have been regularly in the Cameroons River as early as 1841³⁰; among other firms established later John Holt was working from 1869.

The produce trade was quite different from the slave trade, being regular and well organised. Africans came aboard the hulks to buy the usual West Coast trade goods: cloth, clothing, household goods, liquor, etc. They brought to the hulks palm oil which was carefully measured and tested; later in the century palm kernels were sold also. Trade was usually by barter but a certain measure of palm oil or palm kernels came to be used as a standard and called a kroo; it varied considerably³¹. The system of credit in goods, or Trust, was normal; goods were left with African traders to exchange for palm oil. These traders were, above all, the Duala paramount chiefs, especially "King Bell" and "King Akwa". They profited greatly from the trade, Ndumb'a Lobe, who became ruler of the Bonadoo or "King Bell" on the death of his father Lob'a Bebe* in 1858, being particularly rich. But they lived also on credit, taking goods under the Trust system and passing them on through middlemen until they reached

* The "Kings" were by now normally succeeded by close relatives, according to the normal African combination of heredity and selection.

30.F. Pedler, The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa, p.17ff.

31.Gouellain, op.cit., p.101; Pedler, op.cit., p.22: H.Rudin, Germans in the Cameroons, p.223n.; S. Ardener, Eye-Witnesses to the Annexation of Cameroons, Buea 1968, p.6

the palm oil suppliers inland; each intermediary took a percentage. This system operated under the control of the Bell and Akwa rulers through the zones of influence mentioned above.

European traders paid a tax or duty called kumi or comey as at other West Coast trading ports. This naturally helped enrich the Duala "Kings", whose power was respected until the late 19th century, despite frequent British consular interventions. The succession of treaties between the Dualas and the British began with an 1840 treaty between the two main rulers and the British merchants on regulation of trade, and a declaration by the rulers against the slave trade³². Other anti-slave-trade treaties were signed in 1841, 1842 and 1852, the last being signed by the first of the Consuls. He also signed a treaty in 1850 for regulation of shipping and trade, which continued to expand with twelve trading posts aboard hulks established by 1855, six of them British.

In 1856 an important treaty signed on regulation of trade set up a Court of Equity to deal with disputes among firms or between firms and Duala exporters. As a sign of things to come, German as well as British firms were represented on the court. But the British Consul was the leading power in the area. Although Spain enforced its rule over Fernando Po from the 1840s the Consul remained there until 1872, when he moved to Calabar. His activities in other trading ports further west, such as Calabar and Bonny, were much the same as in Cameroons, including

32. See texts of treaties in S. Ardener, op.cit., p.70ff; and two papers by J.R.Brutsch in Etudes Camerounaises, no.43-4, March - June 1954 and no. 47-8, March - June 1955.

establishment of Courts of Equity. The Consuls intervened to protect the Baptist Mission (see below), established at Cameroons from 1845, and to order abolition of customs opposed by the missionaries, such as human sacrifice.

The British sent warships into the Wouri estuary several times; in 1882 they enforced the accession of Tete Tika Mpondo as "King Akwa". Informal British influence was great and Cameroons seemed to be heading for increased British control as surely as Calabar. The long period of British influence left its mark, for example in many words in both the Duala and the Bassa languages (e.g. moni, fam, brede in Duala). During the period of British consular influence the first Christian mission, a British one, began to evangelise the Dualas. The Duala rulers retained their independence and jealously guarded their control of the produce trade. But there were changes after the palm oil trade became the dominant activity in the 19th century.

As in Old Calabar and Bonny³³, it seems that in Cameroons the produce trade spread wealth generally and in particular allowed some others to encroach on the rulers' control of trade. In Cameroons the "Kings" are said to have conceded to lesser chiefs and a few others participation in the direct contact with European traders; however, they had to pay a percentage to the "Kings", who clearly retained control³⁴. But participation in contacts with inland producers became very widespread, and this

33. See K. Dike, Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta.

34. Wirz, op.cit., passim; Gouellain, op.cit., p.99ff.

apparently led trading wealth to undermine social ties including the subjection to the supreme rulers. Whether such disintegration, whose extent seems unclear³⁴, influenced the appeals made from 1864 for a British protectorate is a debatable point. There are others, such as the institution known as the Ngondo. This was apparently a general assembly of the Duala people acting as a court, and meeting on the sandbank or Ngondo near the mouth of the Beseke. This body condemned the ruler of Deido, Eyum Ebele, to death in 1876; but its earlier history is obscure³⁵. It seems to have played part in the events leading to the German annexation in 1884. Here it is sufficient to recall that the "Kings" made moves towards a colonial "protectorate", and that the trend was inevitably towards a British one, so that Cameroons almost came under British rule in 1884 and the surprise move by the Germans only succeeded by a hair's breadth.

Ndumb'a Lobe, who appealed to Queen Victoria for a British protectorate in 1864, later sent his son Manga Ndumbe to school at Bristol. This was possibly arranged by Thomas Dayas, a Bristol sea captain who spent some time at Cameroons and married a Duala girl, Tebedi Nwanjo; his children by her were to be famous. After 1879 there were several approaches from both Bell and Akwa for a British protectorate. In 1881 "King Bell" and "King Akwa" wrote to Mr. Gladstone, and Ndumb'a Lobe raised the question with the Consul, Edward Hewett. But Ndumb'a Lobe became

35. M. Doumbe-Mouloungou, "Le Ngondo", Revue Camerounaise d'Histoire, no. 1, Yaounde, 1971, p.41ff.

heavily indebted to the major German trader Adolf Woermann, who after starting business at Cameroons in 1868 came to occupy a leading position there. This paved the way for the eventual outcome, but as late as 1883, when a mass meeting of Dualas appealed strongly to Hewett to plead in London for a British protectorate, the non-British firms seemed inclined to accept this idea also³⁶.

The Baptist Mission

Christianity was brought to the Dualas by the Baptist Missionary Society of London, which started work in Cameroons in 1845 after starting earlier at Clarence and sending reconnaissance teams to Cameroons. The head of the mission was for thirty years Alfred Saker (1814 - 1880). He started his work with the blessing of the rulers of Akwa and Deido, and established his Bethel temple, for decades the centre of the Mission, in Akwa³⁷. This Mission also began work among the Isubus at Bimbia in 1844 and in 1858 moved its Fernando Po base to a new settlement at Amba Bay on the nearby mainland, after the Spanish expulsion of Protestant missionaries, and called it Victoria.

Saker's colleagues included notably Quintin Thompson, who succeeded Saker in 1876; Thomas Horton Johnson, Joseph Diboll, Alexander Innes, John Peacock

36. S. Ardener, op.cit., p.70ff.

37. J. van Slageren, Les Origines de l'Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun, p.17-24; E.B. Underhill, Alfred Saker: Missionary to Africa.

and E. B. Underhill; Thomas Lewis, who recorded his impressions of Cameroons in his autobiography These Seventy Years; the celebrated George Grenfell; and several Jamaicans — Joseph Merrick, John Clarke, G.K. Prince and, particularly famous, Joseph Jackson Fuller.

The Baptists preached in all parts of the Cameroons settlement, and in 1849 they baptised their first convert, Bekima Bile of Bonapriso (thus a Bell man), who took the English surname of Smith³⁸. Early Christians included also a member of a chiefly family who was renamed Thomas Horton, and, notably, George Nkwe, an ex-slave who became a pastor in 1866, fifteen years after baptism. He was the first of many Duala churchmen who have played a role in their city's history. In 1883 Thompson consecrated one of the most famous of those pastors, Yoshua Dibundu, a Duala by culture but a Bassa by birth³⁹.

Missionary work encountered many obstacles as it always does. Dualas becoming Christians had to give up polygamy, slave-owning (which the British Consul never interfered with), practices linked to witchcraft, and any involvement with practices such as human sacrifice, which the Mission strove to have stopped — besides the other demands of the Christian faith. Even so, a number passed the exacting tests required before being baptised in the Wouri. The number of Christians after forty years was only 200⁴⁰, but the influence of the Baptists was much greater

38. van Slageren, op.cit., p.25. Succeeding paragraphs are based particularly on this source.

39. List of pastors and other leading Protestants of Douala, unpublished MS by the late Pastor J.-R. Brutsch, Geneva.

40. Austen, op.cit., p.25, quoting Baptist Mission sources.

than this small figure would suggest. This was shown when Fuller at Bonaberi secured the abolition of the jengu cult in 1881⁴¹. The chiefs generally favoured the Baptists, while not being converted; while at first so anxious to keep Europeans out of the interior trade routes that they would not even let missionaries travel inland, later the chiefs allowed Fuller to preach at Yabassi and Dibombari, and Grenfell to travel to the Sanaga.

The missionaries started schools and a printing press and gave training in printing, bricklaying, and other skills. They also introduced the avocado pear and other crops. But their most enduring work was the writing down of the Duala language, the production of a grammar in 1855 (the spelling "Dual^la" was used, as often at that time), and above all the translation of the Bible. The Duala Bible, Kalat'a Loba, was completed by Saker in 1872 and was a formative influence on the Duala people.

Cameroons in 1884

With the expansion of the produce trade, the establishment of some "factories" on shore by firms, the work of the Baptist Mission and the opening of churches and schools, and the beginnings of education and literacy Cameroons had begun to experience modern changes before annexation in 1884. The town was a semi-rural one of a few thousands (perhaps up to 15,000) near the river banks, with the koto inland depending on them. The British

41. de Rosny, op.cit., p.211.

called the left-bank settlements, where most Dualas lived and fished and traded, King Bell's, King Akwa's and King Deido's Towns. The first two were on small "plateaux" by the river bank; in Akwa Town was the main Beach (which continued to be called by that English name for decades). The Plateau by the river occupied by the Bonadoo/Bell was called Joss.

The missionary Underhill gave this description of the approach from the sea to Cameroons a few years before 1884:

"After passing the mangrove swamps which lie on both sides of the river's mouth, and whose poisonous reaches are pierced by many tortuous channels leading to the interior, the eastern shore changes its character, and from the sandy beach begin to rise low cliffs of rich red-brown earth, generally covered to the base with various shrubs and trees, interspersed at the top with cocoa and oil-nut palms. The first native settlement that is reached is the town of King Bell, and is marked by the canoes and traders' sheds that line the river's brink. Beyond this another beach, with its numerous canoes, points out the landing place of a still larger town, the residence of the chief, King A'kwa, the head of the most powerful of the tribes on the river. A little farther on, and on the same side of the stream, is situated Dido Town, lately founded by a branch of the A'kwa family. The chief occupation of the people is the collection of palm oil and ivory from the natives of the interior, with which they barter with the traders, whose store-hulks lie off the town,

for the cloth and tobacco, the beads and trinkets, that form the bulk of their trade."⁴²

Akwa was and still is the most populous of the four major divisions of the Dualas, but it may not have been normally the most powerful as Underhill said. In 1884 its ruler was Tete Dika Mpondo, while Ndumb'a Lobe ruled the Bonadoo (Bell), Epee Ekwalla (son of the executed Eyum Ebele) ruled over Deido and was called by the British "King Deido", and Kum'a Mbape, called "Lock Priso" by the Europeans, ruled "Hickory Town" or Bonaberi. The origin of the fancy names given to these and other rulers is hard to guess.

The Treaty of 1884 with Germany

Although the British government hesitated for long about responding to appeals like that made to Hewett at Cameroons in 1883, it eventually sent the Consul out with powers to make protectorate treaties with the seaport states which had been in his Consular territory. In mid-1884 he succeeded in making such treaties with most of the states eastwards from the Niger Delta, up to and including Old Calabar. But Cameroons, at the eastern end of the territory of British Consular power and influence, did not in the end join the others in the Niger Coast Protectorate based on Hewett's treaties. When Hewett arrived at Cameroons he saw the flag of Imperial Germany flying.

42. Underhill, op.cit., p.36.

On 12 July 1884 the Duala rulers, tired of waiting for the British Consul, signed a treaty with German representatives. Ekwalla Epee of Deido signed first, followed by Dika Mpondo of Akwa and Ndumb'a Lobe of Bell⁴³. They handed over sovereign power not directly to a representative of the German government, but to agents of the two major German firms in Cameroons, Woermann and Jantzen und Thormahlen. But as the signing took place the German warship Möwe was already in the estuary, with on board Dr. Gustav Nachtigal, the famous explorer, now Consul at Tunis, who had been sent by the German government with power to make protectorate treaties in Africa. On 14 July 1884 the two companies handed over their powers, conferred by the "Kings", to Nachtigal as representative of the Reich, as had been arranged in Germany and as the Dualas must have been expecting. Then the German flag was hoisted on the left bank.

There is no space here to describe this event in detail or give its background⁴⁴. The addition of Cameroons to the completely new German colonial empire, to which Nachtigal had just added the coast of Togo, went against the trend of decades; but it was not entirely a bolt from the blue, for Woermann, main creditor of "King Bell", had actively promoted the growing movement in Germany for colonial annexation. This movement eventually convinced an initially reluctant Bismarck and Germany

43. S. Ardener, op.cit., p.19ff.

44. see Rudin, op.cit., p.28ff.

acquired Tanganyika, South-West Africa, Togo and the colony which it called Kamerun, originally consisting solely of the Cameroons settlement whose rulers had signed the treaty of 1884. Ndumb'a Lobe may well have promoted the idea of a treaty with Germany, but this is uncertain, as is the whole course of events in July 1884⁴⁵. What is certain is that there was strong opposition, but that the "Kings" and many lesser rulers and tribal elders who signed⁴⁶ knowingly signed a document surrendering power to a full colonial regime⁴⁷.

In fact two documents were signed by Deido and then Akwa and Bell on 12 July. One was the actual treaty, the other an expression of the Dualas' wishes⁴⁸. The former was in five points, and in English, the normal language (with Pidgin) in Cameroons. No copy of the English original seems to have survived. In his research in the 1930's Rudin tried to find a copy without success; he quoted the German version sent to Berlin by Nachtigal⁴⁹, while a German version, not exactly the same, was published in the memoirs, Aurora Colonialis, of Dr. Max Buchner, first representative of the Reich in Kamerun⁵⁰. It is

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45. For various versions of events see Rudin, loc.cit., Doumbe-Moulongo in Revue Camerounaise d'Histoire no.1, 1971, p.44-5; S. Ardener, loc.cit.; and J-P. Nyounaé-Libam, op.cit., parts 2, 3 and 4, July 22 and 29, and August 5 1971 issues of la Presse du Cameroun, Douala.
46. For their names (the real ones and the fancy ones like "Looking-glass Bell") see Nyounaé-Libam op.cit.
47. Ardener, loc.cit.
48. Rudin, op.cit., pp.40-1, 423, 425.
49. Rudin, op.cit., p.425.
50. Quoted in Memorandum by Me. Jean-Louis in Lobe Bell land case, 1930, in Box Cameroun AP II 615, file 1, Archives Nationales Section Outremer, Paris. See Chapter 4 on that memorandum, hereafter cited as "Jean-Louis Memorandum".

quite likely that the two versions were different, as this often happened in colonial treaty-making at that time. But it is unlikely that either had a clause about the treaty being for only 30 years, which the Dualas imagined later.

In the German version Article 1 said the territory concerned could not be ceded to any third party; Article 2, that existing agreements with Great Britain would remain in force. Article 3 was often to be quoted in the next 50 years, for it guaranteed the Dualas' possession of their land. In German, as recorded by Buchner, it said:

"Das jetzt von uns bewirtschaftete Land und der Grund und Boden, auf welchem Städte erbaut sind, sollen Eigentum der jetzigen Besitzer und ihrer Rechtsnachfolger bleiben"⁵¹.

In English, but not necessarily the same words as the original, this means:

"The land now used by us, and the ground on which towns are built, shall remain the property of the present owners and their heirs".

Article 4 provided that the comey would continue to be paid, and Article 5 that, "during the first period of the creation of a government in the country the native customs and usages must be respected" (so Buchner; the text quoted by Rudin omits the words "of the in the country"). This shows that the Dualas knew they would come under a colonial government and were aware that their

51. Jean-Louis Memorandum.

rights or customs might be threatened. Further proof of this lies in the expression of wishes which is preserved in the original English (ungrammatical but definitely English, not Pidgin). This document actually said that the Dualas wanted annexation, not a mere protectorate⁵². This may have been because they expected some benefits, e.g. schools, from a full colonial regime⁴⁷.

The first wish expressed in that document, a very important one, was, "that white men should not go up and trade with the Bushmen, nothing to do with our markets, they must stay here in this river and they give us trust so that we will trade with our Bushmen" ⁵². Among other demands the request for respect for land tenure was repeated in this document, but with reference only to "cultivated ground".

This document seems to have been signed on July 12 by the German Consul, who was not one of the firms' agents⁴⁷. The Dualas felt that the Germans had promised to respect the wishes expressed and that the acceptance of colonial rule was understood to be on certain conditions. They were never to lose this conviction that they had signed a two-sided bargain, and this was to make them approach their colonial masters with a spirit far removed from that expected of "natives" in those days. The rulers of Bonaberi and Bonapriso revolted against the new rulers almost immediately, in December 1884.⁵³

52. Rudin, op.cit., p.423.

53. S. Ardener, op.cit., p.31ff; Rudin, op.cit., p.53ff.

After the quick suppression of that revolt there was no more armed resistance, but there was no meek submission either.

The Dualas and the Germans

Only a short account of the German period is possible here⁵⁴, sufficient to show its impact on Kamerunstadt, as the town was called until 1901. The impact was great. The town grew then into one of the most important new colonial seaports in West Africa with many modern additions and other sweeping changes. The Duala people acquired literacy, a good deal of Western culture, and Protestant Christianity in the thirty years of German rule. In other ways, too, this was their formative period: later Duala society was recognisable by 1914 or earlier.

Colonial rule meant changes for them, and an early and important change was the interference with their established middleman trade by the inland penetration of European firms. Governor Julius von Soden, who replaced Buchner in 1885, began inland expansion of German rule. Within ten years expansion, particularly to the Bassa and Beti countries, had made it possible for firms to buy palm oil, rubber and ivory without passing through the Dualas. This was contrary to the "expression of wishes" of 1884, though not to the Treaty. The actual extent of the firms'

54. There are many works on the subject. Rudin's pioneering Germans in the Cameroons, and inter-war official memoirs and other German writing (often polemical), have been followed by H. Stöcker (ed.), Kamerun unter Deutscher Kolonialherrschaft (1960) and other scholarly works.

interference with the trading network is not easy to assess. They eventually traded far beyond the Dualas' old area of commercial and political influence, but within that area the old network may have controlled a good deal of the movement of palm produce to the firms' "factories". So it is not clear how effectively Dualas were harmed when an ordinance excluded them from trading in the Sanaga valley on 19 June 1895⁵⁵.

At the same time the German authorities tried to reform the age-old Coastal trade system further by abolishing the Trust system and barter⁵⁶; the firms strongly defended both, and barter was still common in 1907-8⁵⁷, but gradually the German mark became the trade currency.

Whatever its practical effect, the aim of the attempted interference in the Dualas' produce trading was enough to arouse a feeling of injustice. But besides reacting angrily the Dualas also showed the adaptability which was to characterise all their reactions to colonialism. If colonial rule removed some opportunities, it provided others. Some Dualas worked for the European firms. Others went in for import-export business on the model of the European firms, notably David Mandessi Bell, a remarkable figure in Douala's history. Born at an unknown date and place, he was enslaved but later freed and adopted

55. Gouellain, op.cit., p.118.

56. Rudin, op.cit., p.222ff.

57. Gouellain, op.cit., p.148.

as the son of Ndumb'a Lobe. After going into business with great success he built a fine two-storey house at Bonanjo in 1897. Much more was to be heard of him.

Like other colonial rulers the Germans took measures against domestic slavery, but slowly. Internal slave-trading was outlawed in 1895 but with limited effect. An ordinance of 1902 provided for the gradual abolition of slavery through the adoption, by all tribes of Kamerun, of the Duala system by which the children of domestic slaves were regarded as half-free. This measure took some time to take effect even among the Dualas, and it is likely that some slave-trading was even encouraged by a major economic change affecting the Dualas: the starting of new cash crop plantations with the encouragement of the Germans⁵⁸.

Few changes in the German period were more important than this one. It is attributed particularly to Manga Ndumbe, or Manga Bell, who succeeded Ndumb'a Lobe in 1897, and to the German administrator of the town in the succeeding years, von Brauchitsch. Dualas started plantations of oil palms and cocoa along the Mungo, Wouri, Dibamba and Dibombe rivers, within a few days on foot of the town. It seems that the Bonadoo took the lead, using lands already belonging to them on the Mungo⁵⁸. Ownership of such lands some distance from the town was a result of the widespread spheres of influence of Bell and Akwa before 1884, and it seems this continued. The new plantations may have at first been little different from

58. Austen, *op.cit.*, p.26ff.

the koto farms run by slaves in earlier years, and for some time the workers on the new plantations were really still slaves, or so it seems – non-Dualas reported to be commonly obtained by purchase⁵⁸. With the labour of these people, Bell and Akwa Dualas established many plantations in the early 1900s. Oil palms were of course familiar to them; cocoa was new, but they were soon growing plenty of it, so that Kamerun's cocoa exports were partly from Gold Coast type African production and partly from the new plantations started by Europeans around Mount Cameroon at the turn of the century. Dualas had a new source of income to offset any loss they had in trading income, and there were to be others.

Agents of the Germans

The European firms, which all established permanent offices and installations on shore in Kamerunstadt early in the German period, needed Africans for various jobs of which some required literacy. Gradually a big demand for clerks, accountants and other junior office staff for the firms arose. And in a short time the colonial government required similar staff. Before long it had its African clerks, Kanzlisten. Naturally the coastal peoples with a start in education provided them at first – the Dualas and the people of Victoria, which was sold to Germany by the Baptist Missionary Society in 1887. Dualas rapidly came to form a large part, for long probably the majority, of the government's junior staff.

58. Austen, op.cit., p.26ff.

Some Dualas helped the Germans in their conquest of the interior. David Mwange Meetom, of Akwa, a signatory of the Treaty, is said to have been a Protestant catechist and evangelist, a clerk active in the government of Akwa, and then an assistant to a German expedition⁵⁹. Josef Toto Ngosso, a Bell man, was secretary to Major Hans Dominik, the conqueror of the Betis and other forest interior peoples. Alfred Etame Dika, of Bonaberi, recalled much later that he had helped the Germans found their post in the Bamileke country at Dschang in 1905 or 1906⁶⁰.

Such people may have had a prominent role in the early years, comparable to that of the Calabar "Political Agents" at that time, but later the African junior staff were subordinate office workers, many of them in Douala or, after 1901, in Buea, the town on the slopes of Mount Cameroon where the Germans moved their seat of government in that year. By that year many Dualas had already qualified for such jobs after leaving the mission or government schools whose number was expanding by then. Ferdinand Edinguele Meetom, a younger son of David Meetom, born according to his account on 27 May 1886, was first sent to England by his father, then to the German government school in Douala, from which he emerged to work as a secretary at the government offices at Buea and Douala⁶¹.

59. Dika Akwa, Evolution des Structures Politiques au Coeur de l'Afrique, p.134ff.

60. Interview, Alfred Etame Dika, Douala.

61. Interview, Ferdinand Edinguele Meetom, Douala.

At the Douala government school with Edinguele Meetom was Isaac Moume Etia of Deido, born on 8 August 1889, son of Etia Tanga Ebelle, a trader with the interior. On 18 April 1905 he entered government service as a Clerk-Interpreter, working first at Douala under von Brauchitsch, then from 1908 at Buea, then from 1911 to 1914 back in Douala⁶².

These men were to have prominent careers, of different sorts, in the Mandate era. So did many of the other Kanzlister. The importance for Duala society of the constant graduation of young Dualas from the new German-language schools into the service of the government and firms was great. These boys became leaders of society in a short space of years; some ended up as Paramount Chiefs. And they established a tradition of preference by Dualas for office jobs, well engrained by 1914.

Among the better known clerks and other junior staff of the Germans were Thomas Missipo Njembele Mouloby, an important Bonadoo elder who worked for the post office established in Kamerun in the 1890s; Franz Mudute Bell, a younger brother of Manga Bell, who also worked for the post office; Moses Ekal'a Wonja Pidi, another postal clerk from Bell; Erdmann Njo Eteki of Deido, born 1882, who worked at the Douala law courts; Robert Gabea Kum Dibongue of Akwa (1896-1974), who became a first-class

62. L. and A. Moume Etia, Notice Biographique sur la Vie de Monsieur Isaac Moume Etia, unpublished MS.

Clerk, at Buea, in 1912; Eberhard Lobe Manga Priso of Bell, a Clerk-Interpreter and a clan elder and plantation owner; Johannes Njembele Ekwe, a customs officer; and two young men who had just joined the Africal civil service in 1914, Albrecht/Albert Mpondo Dika of Akwa and Wilhelm / Guillaume Jemba of Deido, both born in 1899⁶³.

The Chiefs and the German government

The leaders of the Dualas under German rule remained the traditional rulers. This fact seems surprising only if one accepts the view of Gouellain⁶⁴ that colonial rule led to levelling, with social distinctions among Dualas, and distinctions between them and other tribes, obliterated by common subjection. The same author admits that the Germans in fact upheld the chiefs' power. In reality there was no levelling. Dualas reacted in different ways to colonial rule, and some did better than others, financially and in terms of prestige; no doubt the varying success of individuals as traders, clerks and other paid staff, fishermen, urban landlords and planters made the sharing out of influence and wealth a more complex picture in 1914 than it had been in 1884. But the chiefs emerged from the process as strong as ever, within, of course, the limits laid down by foreign domination.

The leading "King" in 1914 was also a planter, a landlord, and a University graduate. He equalled or surpassed other Dualas in almost all the activities in

63. Interviews, Albert Mod'a Bebe Bell, Johannes Sam Deido, Ekal'a Pidi, Albert Mpondo Dika, Douala; on Dibongue, West Africa 6 August 1960. Some Dualas changed their first names from German to French versions after 1916; not all.
 64. op.cit., p.145-67.

which they exploited the opportunities of their new situation. But even other rulers who were not quite in such a position retained leadership which the educated people, the traders, the planters all respected. If any new group had challenged them the colonial rulers would have noted this gladly, but they did not. The reason was no doubt that Dualas felt the need for leaders in a new situation which offered opportunities but also dangers. The chiefs were the obvious ones which all groups could agree to follow.

In Cameroons in 1884 there were the four major rulers already mentioned, and several smaller ones ruling districts under them. Akwa, the most populous Duala section, had the greatest number of these districts — Bonakwamwang, Bonamuti, Boneleke, Bonamikengue, etc.; in Bell-Town or Belldorf there were Bonapriso, Bonaduma, Bonadumbe and the central district of Bonanjo; in Deido Bonamuduru, Bonateki, etc.; in Bonaberi there were Bonaberi proper, Bonendale, Bonasama and other districts. The ruler of such a district was called in the German period Haüptling, and the paramount chief Oberhaüptling. Both retained their positions and wide powers in that period.

Tradition records some early brushes between Germans and some of the paramount-chiefly families. There was the early rising by Kum'a Mbape in 1884, but he was pardoned and was still ruling the Bonaberi when the Germans were expelled. Ndumb'a Lobe's son and heir Manga Ndumbe or Manga Bell seems to have had a disagreement with the

Germans, perhaps because he was British-educated, and to have been deported by them to Togo in the early 1890s⁶⁵. But he returned later and was present when the administrator of Douala, Seitz, sentenced his father, in his turn, to exile - but only to one of his villages on the Mungo - for killing a wife caught "in the act".⁶⁶ Manga Bell succeeded to the Kingship of the Bonadoo on the death of Ndumb'a Lobe on 25 December 1897. Before then he had sent his son Rudolf to Germany for education*.

The Germans took some care to secure the collaboration of the Duala chiefs. These retained privileges including the administration of justice. In 1892 a new system of courts was set up in Kamerunstadt, with the courts of first instance, called "Mixed Courts" or Schiedsgerichte, in the hands of the chiefs, who gave judgement in civil cases involving sums not exceeding 100 marks, and in criminal cases where the penalty did not exceed six months' imprisonment or a 300 marks fine⁶⁷. Besides prestige the chiefs continued to draw income from this judicial system. The Duala chiefs also continued to draw the comey or kumi previously paid by the firms, but now the government paid it at a fixed rate.⁶⁸

The Dualas' town was important to the Germans as it was their seat of government during the years of conquest in the interior under von Soden, his successor Governor von Zimmerer (1891-5), and Jesko von Puttkamer,

* Members of this family from now commonly affixed "Bell" to their names.

65. L. Moume Etia, Sites Historiques de Douala, vol.2, p.35.

66. Gouellain, op.cit., p.143.

67. Rudin, op.cit., p.200-1.

68. Rudin, op.cit., p.156.

who became Governor in 1895 and held the post for the unusually long period of twelve years. It was he who moved the capital to Buea in 1901. Earlier, for the purposes of local administration, he had made Kamerunstadt and its environs a District or Bezirk; Theodor Seitz was its first administrator or Bezirksamtman. He was succeeded in 1899 by von Brauchitsch, who remained for nearly ten years.

By a decree of 1 . January 1901, Kamerunstadt was renamed Duala. The name has remained, with Germans still using the spelling "Duala" while British writers now use the French spelling for the town, Douala.

By 1901 the Germans were well on the way to occupying the territory stretching to the north and east, which had been allotted to them by international agreement and called after the Dualas' settlement. Major expeditions had brought German rule as far as the Bamileke and Beti peoples by the early 1890s; Yaounde, called after the Ewondos and used by the Germans as a hill station, was founded in 1889. North-east of the Bamilekes the Germans annexed the powerful Bamoun kingdom, retaining its talented ruler Njoya as their vassal in their "indirect rule" system. This system was also applied to the Fulani states further north, conquered by the early 1900s.

The new German colony, which was legally termed a Protectorate or Schutzgebiet, was bordered on the west by the British Protectorates of Southern and Northern Nigeria, amalgamated in 1914; on the east and south by the French

Congo, ruled from Brazzaville after its long and strongly-resisted conquest and in 1910 renamed French Equatorial Africa, and also, in the south, Rio Muni, the mainland portion of Spanish Guinea – the other part of that colony being Fernando Po, "Dikabo" to the nearby Dualas. In 1911 large areas of the four components of French Equatorial Africa – Gabon, Middle-Congo, Ubangi-Shari, and Chad – were added to Kamerun as "Neu-Kamerun", but, as it turned out, only for three years.

For economic exploitation the Germans took trouble to develop white settlers' plantations on the volcanic mountain slopes around Buea and Victoria, where cocoa, palms and plantation rubber were grown with massive use of forced labour in shocking conditions. In the far south they sponsored wild rubber collection organised by a concessionary company, the Süd-West Kamerun Gesellschaft, and this product was for long Kamerun's main export.

Dualas suffered less than most people in Kamerun from the worst features of colonial rule, which were very bad before the reforms initiated by the new Colonial Ministry from 1907, but their grievances were serious enough to them and were all the more keenly felt because they thought that they had made a genuine two-sided bargain in 1884. This feeling, which the rapid spread of education helped them to articulate, made the Dualas a vocally restless group under colonial rule from an early date. In 1902 they showed their feelings by sending a protest delegation to Germany, and it is significant that

they chose as leaders the four paramount chiefs.

The Missions and the independent Baptists.

Before describing this event it is necessary to mention another formative influence which the Dualas underwent in the thirty years of German rule: the spread of Christianity.

By 1914 a great number, perhaps already the majority of the Dualas were Christians. Most were Protestants, although the progress of Protestantism, after its early start, was disturbed at first after 1884. Conditions were made difficult for the Baptist missionaries, suspected of encouraging Dualas' preference for the British, and they left Douala, also selling their settlement at Victoria. In 1886 they were replaced by missionaries of the Basle Mission⁶⁹, which was based in Switzerland but drew a large part of its funds and staff from Germany. The first team of the new mission was headed by Pastor Gottlieb Munz. These and others who followed were able to expand on the basis of the pioneering work of the British Baptists.

However, some of the Duala Baptists were unwilling to submit to the new Mission. Although the Baslers normally preached infant baptism they did not insist on it for the Dualas, and the disagreement arose rather from the Baptists' preference for independent congregations, which was opposed by the Mission's desire for centralised control by itself. The Mission linked their protests with moral laxity and indiscipline, as defined by its pastors. On

69. This account is largely based on van Slageren, op.cit.

13 March 1888 many Duala Baptists broke away and formed the Native Baptist Church.

This new church, one of an already impressive number of independent churches in white-ruled Africa, was led by Pastor Yoshua Dibundu. It was definitely Christian and very zealous, building new temples in Douala, extending its preaching outside the town, and continuing the Baptists' schools with the aid of teachers who, because of the Church's poverty, received little or no pay⁷⁰.

Although the NBC (it always used the English name) came under missionary control again, it was by its own free wish. It asked the Baptist Mission of Berlin to send missionaries, who arrived in 1891 with the German-American August Steffens at their head. They took over control of the Baptists and for some years the NBC ceased to exist. As a pastor under that Mission Dibundu consecrated as pastor in 1894 Alfred Tobbo Deido, or Tobbo Eyoun, son of the Deido paramount chief Eyum Ebele.

Only a few years later, however, Dibundu had a disagreement with a new head of the Mission, Suvern, and the Mission founded a new church at Bonalembe to be its headquarters, leaving to Dibundu and others who felt like him the use of the new Bethel church, built on the site of Saker's chapel. At some time – 1906 according to the Duala church historian Pastor Mbende – the split became open, so that the NBC was effectively revived. Dibundu served two short prison terms and in 1905 was excommunicated

70. van Slageren, op.cit., p.47ff.

for polygamy. Such personal factors always influence church movements, but the NBC can nonetheless be seen as an expression of the Dualas' anti-colonial feeling. Its disciples were probably outnumbered always by those of the Basle and Baptist Missions, but they were quite numerous, especially in Akwa. Tobbo Deido followed Dibundu and in 1911 consecrated a new independent Baptist pastor, Joseph Ngando Nsangué, born in 1882 at Bonamwang, North Akwa⁷¹.

The two Protestant Missions had the same basic aims as any missions: conversion, enforcement of Christian morals (as understood by them), starting of schools for boys and girls, and training of catechists, evangelists, teachers and some pastors. They also carried on trade as well; the Basler Mission had its flourishing Basler Missionshandlungsgesellschaft. It differed from ordinary firms ⁱⁿ selling no strong liquor; the Missions, in Kamerun as elsewhere, headed the campaign against the sale of spirits to Africans.

The Basle Mission preached among the Abo, Malimba and Bassa peoples, then, early in the 20th century, among the Bamilekes, while the Berlin Baptists preached to the Banens and Tikars. But Douala became in the German era one of the two main centres of Protestantism, and other being the Boulou country evangelised from the 1880s by the American Presbyterian Mission.

The Africans working for the Missions included in a short time many teachers and catechists. Johannes

71. Notes on Douala pastors and leading Christians by Pastor Brutsch.

Deibol of Bonanjo was consecrated pastor in 1901, but after only a few years with the Basle Mission died an early death in 1908⁷¹. In that year the Baptist Mission consecrated Adolf Lotin Same of Bonamuti in Akwa (born 8 October 1881); he was to become a particularly famous churchman in Douala. Equally famous were three pastors consecrated in late 1912 by the Basle Mission: Jacob Modi Din of Bonaduma (Bell), Joseph Kuo Issedou of Akwa, and Joseph Ekollo of Bonaberi. Modi Din, born in 1876 or even earlier (some say as early as 1864), went to the Basle Mission's school for boys and was later baptised, and became a teacher in an outlying village where his pupils were non-Dualas. Later he was head of the Mission's Bonanjo school for boys and opened classes for girls there. In 1905 he was put in charge of all the Mission's schools for girls in Douala; already a lay preacher, he went on Sundays to preach among the Bassas near Douala. Then, in 1908, he took charge of the deceased Deibol's parish of Bonapriso and Bonaduma, though not yet a pastor. After his consecration he worked first in rural areas near Douala⁷².

Besides the two Protestant Missions there was a Catholic Mission, run by the German Province of the order of Pallotine Fathers. They opened their station at Bonadibong (Akwa) in 1898. The Catholic Mission was run from Douala, eventually with a Vicar Apostolic (in 1914, Mgr. Vieter) at its head. It made far fewer converts

72. F. Grob, Témoins Camerounais de l'Évangile.

among the Dualas than the Protestants. They included one famous catechist, Andreas Mbangue, like Pastor Dibundu of recent non-Duala origin; he received training in Germany. The Sacred Heart Fathers ran a less important Mission in northern and western Cameroon.

Education in Douala.

If Dualas were not all Christian by 1914 the social position of the new faith was assured by then, with chiefs and elders being converted, and it was enhanced by the Missions' major role in education. Thus, like Christianity, literacy may well have spread over the majority of the Dualas, or of those under forty, by 1914.

The Basle Mission had popular elementary schools (Dorfschulen), selection courses in primary and middle schools for boys, some schools for girls, secondary education in German at Deutschen Schulen, and higher education for training of preachers and teachers⁷³. The use of the term Deutschen Schulen indicates the extensive use of Duala in other schools. The Basle Mission greatly developed that language, on the basis of the British Baptists' work, and not only in Douala; because of missionary work many people of other tribes outside Douala came to use it. Eventually Governors Puttkamer and Seitz asked the Mission not to teach Duala to other tribes, but after a long time⁷⁴.

73. van Slageren, op.cit., p.55.

74. Rudin, op. cit., p. 108.

The influence of Dualas over other tribes was continued by the Missions who used their language and provided them with their lead in education. The subordinate but locally important power of Dualas working for the government helped to maintain this. So, even more, did the employment of non-Duala slaves/labourers on the Dualas' plantations, and the continued subjection of Sawa and Bassa people to Duala chiefs' courts. The Dualas might not have maintained this dominant position if the Germans had seriously tried to stop them, but the Germans never did so. The Dualas, their chiefs, their planters and their clerks were so useful that the Germans preferred to enlist their collaboration. No effort to raise the level of other tribes vis-a-vis the Dualas was made.

The government helped the Dualas advance their position by adding its schools to the Missions', the first being at Bonanjo in 1888, followed by another at Deido. The government sought to have more of the German language taught in all schools, but its belated efforts to order this were offset by the widespread literacy in Duala encouraged by the Missions, and the continued daily use of English and Pidgin.

Teachers at the government schools were an important element among the government junior staff. Notable among them was Franz Sengat-Kuo, of Akwa, at the government school at Bonanjo. Rather younger was Albrecht/Albert Mod'a Bebe Bell, a son of Manga Bell's brother Bebe Bell; born on 19 December 1893, he became a Monitor (junior schoolteacher) at the government school

on 1 April 1912⁷⁵.

Dualas in Germany.

Only a few years after Germany's colonisation of parts of Africa a number of Africans were in Germany itself. Of the Cameroonians most were probably Dualas. Several members of chiefly families went to Germany for education, the most famous being Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, customarily known simply as Duala Manga. Born in 1873, he went to Christaller's government school before going to Germany in the 1890s. He studied at a Gymnasium at Ulm and then Bonn University, where he took a law degree⁷⁶. He returned to Douala in 1896, and soon afterwards married Emma Engome, daughter of Thomas Dayas.

After Rudolf several of his brothers went to Germany for studies, and at least two of his sisters. The brothers Henry Lobe Bell, Richard Din Manga Bell and Ekwe Bell went to Germany, where they obtained good qualifications in mechanical engineering, agricultural science and architecture respectively. Richard Bell obtained a Diploma in Agronomy at Oranienbaum.

Ludwig Mpondo Akwa (or Mpondo Dika), son of Tete Dika Mpondo or "King Akwa", also received education in Germany. David Mandessi Bell sent his daughter Maria to Germany, where there were other Duala girls at school at various times, including Esther Sike Bile, sent there by the Baptist Mission⁷⁷. Most other students were

75. Interview, Albert Mod'a Bebe Bell.

76. René Douala Manga Bell in l'Effort Camerounais, Yaounde, no. 211, 1 November 1959.

77. van Slageren, op. cit., p.52.

probably sponsored by their families. Several members of some families went, for example Sike Bile and her brothers Robert Ebolo Bile, who returned before 1914, and Joseph Ekwe Bile, who did not. A German teacher is said to have taken Doo Dayas, son of Thomas Dayas and after schooling an important Kanzlist, to Germany for schooling; another is said to have taken Stephan Dualla Missipo, a son (born 1901) of the Bonadoo elder Missipo Mouloby, there in 1913⁷⁸.

Work and income among the Dualas

For the vast majority of Dualas who stayed at home there was an ever-increasing number of jobs of a "Western" sort, with the firms — who employed such people as Doo Dayas, clerk for a firm of Edea on the Sanaga for a time, and Lotin Same, the future pastor, employed for a time by Woermann — and the government and the missions. Some individuals outside the normal categories of staff were John Njembele Mouloby, a river pilot, father of the Kanzlist Missipo Mouloby⁷⁹; and a draughtsman and architect, Wilfried Pokossy Dumbe, who worked for German firms and then independently as an architect⁸⁰. Many Dualas worked as traders in produce and European goods; besides Mandessi Bell there was another member of the Bell

78. Interview, Albert Bebe Bell.

79. Interview, Rodolphe Doumbe-Mouloby.

80. Letter of Chef de Circonscription, Douala, to Commissioner, Douala 2 March 1925, in file APA 10547/C, Cameroon Archives.

family, Joseph Bebe Bell (cousin of Ndumb'a Lobe), who as a trader was able to order a £2,000 prefabricated house from Liverpool in 1910⁸¹.

Many Dualas, perhaps the majority still in 1914, depended mainly on non-wage income, as traders, plantation owners, fishermen and craftsmen; fishing had continued in the palm oil trading era, and much later fishermen were selling palm oil as a sideline. The use of money spread slowly and much later plantation owners were paying their labourers in kind. But the payment of regular salaries and wages spread, with the chiefs receiving them as well as the office workers.

The Dualas had by the end of the German era the elite which was to be recognisable among them from then on. They had chiefs, elders, clerks and other office staff, pastors, teachers, businessmen, planters, traders, with much in common – a language which many could read and write, widespread membership of a Protestant church, a general desire to seek Western education and culture (in dress frequently, and where possible in housing). They had similarities with the coastal elites of Lagos, Cape Coast and Freetown at the same period, and like them were often criticising the colonial regime strongly. Educated elites normally took the lead in such protests but the Dualas, at least, may have been more free to do so because they were so valuable to the government as office workers and, very important, as owners of

81. See Chapter Three.

plantations contributing to the exports of palm products and cocoa.

The Growth of the City

During the thirty years of German rule the Dualas' home area was transformed from a semi-rural group of villages to a small, still partly rural, but expanding and modernising commercial seaport.

The firms established "factories", warehouses and staff houses and became an important feature of the Douala scene. Important ones were John Holt; R. & W. King; Woermann; the Deutsch Kamerun Gesellschaft and Afrikanische Compagnie; Hatton & Cookson, of Liverpool; and the Basler Missionshandlungsgesellschaft⁸². They soon established branches in other towns, but they remained based on the coast, often at Douala. There they built masonry offices and houses on land bought or leased from Dualas.

Dualas were themselves building solid modern-style houses by 1900. Manga Ndumbe built at Bonanjo a strange house like a little Eastern pagoda (it is now often called "la Pagode"), where his son Duala Manga later lived. Duala Manga had other houses as well, including one let to a European who ran it as a hotel, the Kaiserhof. Many modern houses were erected by Africans at Deido. The German government built its own white masonry houses, still looking tasteful and proving useful today, such as the old

82. Report by General Dobell, 27 September 1914, in file Cameroun AP II Affaires Militaires I, Archives Nationales Section Outremer, Paris.

government house at Bonanjo.

The Germans also introduced modern drainage, and piped water from an efficient waterworks at Deido. There was no general electricity supply at that time, but there was a good telephone system and from the 1890s Douala was linked to Europe by cable.

Trouble was taken over the development of Douala because it rose steadily in importance as a port and commercial centre. For most of the German period Kribi and Victoria were equally important as ports, Kribi being convenient for wild rubber exports and Victoria for the products of the big plantations nearby. But much of the cocoa, palm oil and palm kernels, including those produced by the Africans of Douala on their plantations, was exported via Douala, where many of the cargoes of European clothes, umbrellas, dishes, hats, lamps, salt, rice, gramophones, snuff, paraffin, pipes, beer and accordions were unloaded.

Douala became the most important port after railways had been built into the interior from there, not from Kribi as the firms at Kribi had wanted⁸³. The Northern Railway was built from Bonaberi to Nkongsamba from 1908 to 1911, passing through the rich farming area of the Mungo Valley, and was used to transport its palm products and cocoa. European and African traders were attracted to the new railhead commercial centre, Nkongsamba⁸⁴. The Central Railway was started in 1910 from the left bank

83. Rudin, op.cit., p.242-3.

84. P. Billard, La Circulation au Sud-Cameroun, p.42ff.

of the Wouri, by the Beseke stream and the traditional meeting place of the Ngondo. In 1911 it reached Edea, where it crossed the river Sanaga by a fine steel girder bridge still standing, and it had reached Eseka by 1914⁸⁴.

The two railways were not connected, but as early as 1908 the Wouri bridge which was not to be built until 1955 was suggested. Roads were built in the town before 1914, when there were already a few motor vehicles.

The harbour installations included by 1914 the T-shaped Government Wharf, a quay for barges and small boats, jetties, and a floating dock. Vessels of up to six metres draught could reach Douala at high tide. The harbour's handling capacity was estimated at 100,000 tons per year, but this figure was not attained; in 1912 62,524 tons were handled⁸⁵. Then and for long afterwards many ships called not at Douala harbour but at the Suellaba roads. In 1913 230 steamships called, 172 of them German.

The foundations of modern Douala were truly laid by the Germans. It was an administrative town as well as a commercial one, for not all government offices were moved to Buea in 1901 and some were brought back later. Besides the main government buildings at Bonanjo the town came to have, on the Joss plateau of Bonanjo alone, a big park overlooking the estuary, a customs house, a prison, seven barracks for troops and police, three hospital buildings (one for Africans),

85. Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p.123.

four warehouses, a tile-making workshop, ten houses for officials, two houses for Kru sailors, and a government school⁸⁶. von Brauchitsch was responsible for the tracing of wide streets, a causeway across the Beske between Bonanjo and Akwa, and the draining of the Akwa swamp⁸⁷.

The Germans were strict about public health and clean streets in Douala. Unfortunately this meant severe rules and regulations imposed on the Africans⁸⁸, who had to obey them partly for the sake of white men's health. Eventually the Germans were to decide on segregation with that very consideration in mind. Stiff public health regulations were to be a feature of life in Douala from then on. There was to be unceasing harassment, punishment and ill-treatment of Africans in the cause of sanitation.

The population; the non-Duala element.

A German census in 1907 counted about 60,000 Africans in the Douala Bezirk. It admitted that the figures for some tribes were approximate and the total can be taken only as a rough estimate, not very helpful for Douala town which covered only a part of the Bezirk. The figure of 22,000 Dualas seems too high in relation to later, credible figures; the 1910 census spoke of 15,891

86. *ibid.*, p.125

87. *ibid.*, p.127

88. Rudin, *op.cit.*, p.300,352

Dualas in the Bezirk, a more likely figure. The non-Dualas listed in 1907 (Abos, Wuris, Balongs, Bakokos, etc) were probably all outside Douala town, or nearly all. Douala in 1914 may have had between 15,000 and 20,000 people, nearly all Dualas⁸⁹.

The number of non-Duala Africans is impossible to assess. Such people had gone to the Dualas' settlement for decades or centuries, but while some were probably traders most were slaves who were rapidly absorbed into the Duala population. Many famous Dualas were of non-Duala origin, like Mandessi Bell and Pastor Dibundu. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries some African Strangers may have had separate settlements retaining their identity, as is indicated by the name "Bali", given to a plateau adjoining Joss and belonging to the Bonadoo, and called after immigrants from the Bali-speaking peoples. But the majority, while no longer exactly slaves in the town as others still were on the Dualas' new plantations, lived among the Dualas in a socially subordinate status and tended to become Duala-ised.

Until well into the 20th century African Strangers commonly lived in Dualas' compounds, paying rent in cash or kind, and becoming like extended family members. Survivors of the German period did not recall immigrant groups separate from the Dualas. But there must have been some people attracted by the already growing job opportunities; some are said to have been brought to Bonaberi for construction

89. Gouellain, op.cit., p.156-7.

of the Northern Railway⁹⁰.

There may have been office staff of other tribes posted to Douala, but probably very few as Dualas were posted as office staff all over Kamerun. Martin Mbody, a Bassa from one of the villages near Douala, went to the Buea Seminary and then worked as a Kanzlist in Douala.⁹¹

There were already many immigrants from other parts of West Africa. There are references to Kru seamen, who may have formed part of the resident Liberian community existing in 1920. The British firms may have started in the German period to bring in clerks from British West Africa, as they did later. Ekwe Bell, brother of Rudolf, married the daughter of a Togolese mother (from Keta) and a Duala father⁹². Hausas are recorded both as soldiers and as traders in German Kamerun, but commonly outside Douala.

There were 1,800 Europeans in Kamerun in 1913, including certainly several hundreds in Douala: officials, businessmen, missionaries. Many others were constantly passing through the major seaport. Of the resident Europeans most were single men, but some officials and most Protestant missionaries brought their families out, and this encouraged ideas of a "European zone" in Douala. The resulting segregation plan was to lead to a major clash between the colonial government and the Dualas,

90. Interview, Alfred Etame Dika (who worked for that Railway), and Louis Mbappe.

91. Interview, Pierre Penda, André Njo and Bruno Ditourou Eyoun, Douala-Bassa.

92. Interview, Dr. Ekwe Bell.

which was, however, the culmination of many years of bad relations.

The 1902 Delegation.

Dualas' grievances against the Germans, including the interference with their trading but really amounting to a grievance against the normal condition of being colonised, accumulated until in July 1902 money was raised in all four parts of Duala to send the Paramount Chiefs and others on a delegation to Germany to present the grievances to the Kaiser himself.

According to Doumbe-Moulongo it was the Ngondo that organised the subscription—half a mark from each able-bodied adult— and was the inspirer of the protest⁹³. The Ngondo is said to have been allowed to meet, though not to act as a court, in the German period. If it lay behind the 1902 delegation this could indicate a feeling that relations with Germany, fixed by a Treaty approved by the Ngondo (so it is said), needed to be re-examined because of the disappointment with the results of the Treaty.

Tradition recalls that a businessman in Deido, Sam Andunga, made up the cost of the Deido paramount chief's steamer fare and was then called "Sam Deido" by acclamation⁹⁴. Certainly he was so called in later years, when he was among the most prominent Duala businessmen.

93. M. Doumbe-Moulongo, "le Ngondo", p.49.

94. Interview, Johannes Sam Deido ("Andunga" is a phonetic rendering).

The choice of the paramount chiefs as representatives showed an attachment to them which was never to be destroyed. Three of the four went, Kum'a Mbape being too old. Manga Bell took with him his son Rudolf Duala Managa Bell and Rudolf's young son, Alexander. Destined to be, after his father, the most famous son of Douala, the first offspring of the marriage of Duala Manga and Emma Engome was born on 3 Dec. 1897. Traditionally named Ndumb'a Duala, he is better known by his full name in the French version, Prince Alexandre Douala Manga Bell. In 1902 he was left in Germany for education. Before leaving he was installed as heir to the Bonadoo throne at the traditional baobab tree in Bonaberi; it is not clear what ceremony this was, as it could not have been the traditional enthroning ceremony held under that tree, Ndumb'a Duala's grandfather being still on the throne. Besides his son and grandson Manga Bell was also accompanied by the Bonanjo elder Eyum Njembele. Dika Mpondo took his son Ludwig Mpondo Dika. Traditional accounts of their reception in Germany vary, but some say the Kaiser did receive the delegation⁹⁵.

While the paramount chiefs returned quite soon to Douala, where Ekwalla Epee died on 3 Sept. 1903 and was succeeded by his son Epee Ekwalla⁹⁶, some of their families stayed in Germany. Alexander Ndumb'a Duala began

95. E. Ghomsi, "Résistance à l'Impérialisme Européen; le Cas des Doualas du Cameroun", *Afrika-Zamani* no.4, July 1975; L. Moume Etia, *Sites Historiques de Douala*, vol.2, p.23.

96. Interview with Johannes Sam Deido, and his papers.

schooling which ended in a Prussian military academy. Mpondo Dika acted as a representative of Dualas dissatisfied with German rule, contacting the opposition in the Reichstag, and he started a Duala-language newspaper in Germany, Elolomb'a Kamerun (the Kamerun Sun).

Duala-German Relations to 1911.

After 1902 the Dualas continued to criticise the administration and show their dislike of subjection. Tete Dika Mpondo was sentenced to five months' hard labour for protests⁹⁷. On 1 July 1903 taxation, of the ordinary colonial flat-rate sort, was introduced in Douala Bezirk, with those unable to pay obliged to "work off" the tax in work which could be for private employers⁹⁸. The rate was three marks a year, payable by each man or unmarried woman able to work; men had to pay two marks more for each wife apart from the first⁹⁹. There were protests at this and other government measures, in which the Akwas seem to have been the most vocal of the Dualas. In 1905 some Akwa people sent a big written protest to the Reichstag, with a long list of grievances. The German parliament investigated, and von Puttkamer was recalled in 1907; the Duala protesters believed that they had secured this, and perhaps rightly, though the governor had held office for an unusually long term. The new Colonial Office created in 1907 wanted to reform many of the oppressive features of

97. Rudin, op.cit., p.206.

98. ibid., p.321.

99. ibid., p.339-41.

colonialism with which von Puttkamer had been associated. His successor was Theodor Seitz, former Bezirksamtmann for Douala.

In 1907 the Akwa people refused to pay their taxes. The government took some action against them, but it gave in so far as to replace the head tax by a hut tax in Douala, even after much of Kamerun was subject to the head tax. In 1911 a head tax was re-introduced in Douala at the rate of six marks.

Manga Bell died on 2 Sept. 1908. von Brauchitsch gave a eulogy and Seitz attended the funeral. Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, who succeeded his father and was in 1910 crowned under the baobab tree by the aged Kum'a Mbape, was to lead the Dualas in the most celebrated phase of their resistance. This followed the segregation and expropriation plan of Hermann Röhm, who became Bezirksamtmann when von Brauchitsch died just a few days after Manga Bell.

Expropriation in the German colonies had been provided for in a decree of 1903. In 1906 a large amount of Bonaberi land was expropriated for the terminus of the Northern Railway; apparently there was little opposition, as the Germans consulted the people after good advance warning and they decided to submit¹⁰⁰. In other cases the law was frequently not invoked, and the government bought land as the firms did. In this way the adaptable Dualas profited from the colonial development of their town, for land values rose greatly; many of the elite lived partly off urban land or house rents by 1914. But

100. Interview, Alfred Etame Dika.

the government took some land by expropriation, including the plot at Akwa on which Joseph Bebe Bell had hoped to build his £2,000 prefabricated house, in 1910. As he was not compensated for the value of the house parts, it is not surprising that he spent twenty years seeking redress. For land taken there was compensation.

In 1910, when Governor Gleim succeeded Seitz, the idea of a European zone in Douala, for which land would be confiscated from the Dualas, was advanced. Before the struggle provoked by this reached its peak, old "King Akwa" clashed with the government again. This was soon after the return of his son, and both were deported to other parts of Kamerun, the father to Campo and the son to various places in the north. Tete Dika Mpondo was also deposed, and in his place the Germans put another of his sons, Diboussi Akwa.

The Struggle for the Land.

The sequel to the expropriation and segregation plan was an epic event in Douala's history which cannot be described here in the detail it deserves¹⁰¹, but must be outlined because of its great effect on later history.

The plan was to expropriate all the land lying near the river on the left bank, including the Joss (Bonanjo) and Akwa plateaux and Deido, and develop it as

101. There is a good account in a series of articles, based on original documents, by René Douala Manga Bell (René Bell) in L'Effort Camerounais (Yaounde), 22 Nov., 29 Nov., 6 Dec., 13 Dec., and 27 Dec. 1959 and 17 January 1960. This summary is based on it.

a European administrative, business and residential area. The Africans would be moved to new settlements a little inland, to be called Neu-Bell, Neu-Akwa and Neu-Deido. In between, there would be a "Free Zone" to be left, initially at least, without buildings.

A long memorandum on the question written in 1913 by the then Colonial Secretary, Dr. Solf, admitted that one reason for the plan was the rising cost of land purchases. But piecemeal expropriation for buildings such as those already set up, including the government buildings at Bonanjo, would appear to have been possible instead of the massive expropriation of most of the Dualas and their removal from their ancestral homes, if there had not been another motive stressed more than the financial one: the alleged need to separate Europeans from insanitary and infectious areas.

The action planned was bound to be so drastic for the Dualas, with their keen sense of their rights to add to normal feelings, that it is hard to believe Solf's assertion that at first they had seemed likely to agree to it and accept the compensation. In 1910 the definitive plan was drawn up with compensation assessed at a figure totalling 650,000 marks. There was to be extra compensation for land with buildings, and small amounts were to be paid for traditional huts affected. The compensation was far below market land prices and anyway the government's need for the large amount of land involved was not obvious. The Dualas saw the racist nature of the plan, in which there was scarcely even a pretence of serving African interests.

The Germans decided to start with Belldorf, including the Joss plateau. This helped to make Duala Manga the leader of the resistance, but he was a natural one anyway. Opposition was mounting by late 1911. Rohm at that point fell ill and was sent home; Gleim suffered the same fate two months later, in Nov. 1911, after talking with Duala chiefs to try to persuade them to agree to the expropriation. The protest leaders would not agree, and sent two messages to the Reichstag. They said the compensation offered was too small and the whole plan was against their interests because the new villages inland would not afford facilities for their farming and fishing such as they now had. The German parliament did not take any action yet, but the administration did not move at once, either. Röhme returned to his post in 1912; Gleim did not, and was replaced by Governor Ebermaier.

Solf visited Douala in 1912 and he and Ebermaier met the Duala leaders in November. Expatriate businessmen and Protestant and Catholic missionaries, who all opposed the measures planned, attended. Rudolf Bell called for the dropping of the whole plan, but the Governor said the inconvenience caused would be small and the decision had been taken anyway. According to an account written by Albert Bebe Bell, cousin of Rudolf, the latter agreed to give up some Bell land as long as the rest of this, and all Akwa and Deido, were left alone, but Röhme refused¹⁰².

102. Albert Mod'a Bebe Bell, Kwed'a Tet'Ekombo, unpublished MS, Douala.

Further protests were made to Röh̄m, who refused to give in except for one concession, a quite important one: Africans who had built European-style houses would be allowed to stay. This was important for some of the elite including Mandessi Bell, Mudute Bell and Rudolf himself, but did not help the majority, and it was the only concession made. The Dualas were not satisfied, and Rudolf asked Röh̄m if the 1884 Treaty was in force; Röh̄m said it was, but did not affect expropriation with compensation. The question showed how Dualas saw the issue involved.

The Reichstag discussed the earlier petition at the end of 1912; there was no favourable outcome for the Dualas, but they could see attention was being paid to their case. They sent a telegram to the Reichstag in January 1913, but for some days it was stopped at the post office, while at that moment an ordinance for the expropriation of 903 acres was published. This ordinance listed 37 exempted properties, following Röh̄m's concession. But some further measures were needed, and they were still delayed; clearly the opposition was making some impact, with at least some missionaries backing it and further cables being sent to the Reichstag, one from Duala Manga himself. Two Reichstag commissions examined the petition in the first half of 1913; both approved the government's plans but urged it to apply them with moderation. The Dualas about then engaged a lawyer in Germany, Dr. Flemming; later there was to be another, Dr. Halpert.

Rudolf Bell's leading collaborators in the opposition were his brother Richard, back from Germany;

Alfred Tokoto Essome, chief of Bonadumbe; Eberhard Lobe Manga Priso and Missipo Mouloby, leading Bonadoo elders; Ngosso Din, Rudolf's secretary; Edinguele Meetom, Kone Bwindi and Kwa Elame of Akwa; and Pastor Jacob Modi Din, of Bell, who kept a diary of the events, in Duala*.

On 4 August 1913 Rudolf Duala Manga Bell was suspended from his functions as Paramount Chief. To make the reason clear, it was stated that the measure was for the duration of the expropriation. The opposition continued undaunted. Flemming wrote to the Imperial Chancellor. Solf went to Douala again, to be greeted on arrival by another petition. Discussions led nowhere, and the government forbade the Dualas to send a delegation to see the Kaiser. Halpert then sent a long legal argument against the planned expropriation to Solf, in vain.

By then opposition was becoming stronger. The rate of the head tax was raised in 1913 and in the following year the Dualas refused to pay unless they were given more time¹⁰³. In late 1913 Rudolf Bell, or so it was later alleged, wrote letters to England and France seeking support.

The Bonanjo expropriation and New-Bell.

After all the delays the government finally went ahead with its expropriation plan early in 1914. Between January and March the Africans' land on the Joss plateau

* It was, alas, burned by his family after his death in 1971.
103. Rudin, op.cit., p.340-1.

of Bonanjo ~~was~~ seized and the inhabitants evicted. Many parts of the Bonadoo land were covered in this first phase, including the districts of Bonapriso, Bonaduma and Bonadumbe. The Bali plateau was apparently also covered, but possibly the eviction of the inhabitants was not completed, or in some other way the full process was not carried out, before August 1914.

People present at the time well remember the scenes of eviction and destruction on the Joss plateau and the beginnings of the exile at Neu-Bell, a mile away across an expanse of bush¹⁰⁴. It was a major event in the town's history, a traumatic one.

The new homes for the displaced people had been neatly laid out; the Paramount Chief had a house in the settlement, the Kronhaus. Neu-Bell was normally called New-Bell because of the prevailing use of Pidgin, and this version of the name has stuck. Quite apart from the inconveniences pointed out in the previous three years, such as the distance from the river and the resulting problems for fishermen, the exile would have been exile whatever the material conditions. Opposition continued even as the forcible move to New-Bell went on.

On 18 March 1914 a Reichstag commission discussing the budget for Kamerun dealt with the Douala expropriation because of the provision for it and other "sanitation" work in Douala in the budget, and of a new petition from Halpert. It is clear that it rejected the lawyer's arguments, and if

104. e.g. interview, Albert Mod'a Bebe Bell, Douala 1972.

it discussed the matter again resolved once more in favour of the government. The myth which grew up in Douala later, of the Reichstag sending a telegram to stop the expropriation, was based on wishful thinking.

Other events were soon to follow to prevent the Germans from proceeding with the expropriation of Akwa and Deido. But the protest against them had been largely a failure; Hermann Röhm had at last pushed through his harsh racialist plan before he was replaced in April 1914 by Dr. Wienecke. However, it is remarkable that the plan took so long to push through. Certainly the opposition delayed the first phase and so, though this could not have been foreseen, prevented the next ones, Akwa and Deido.

The Trial and Execution of Rudolf Duala Manga Bell.

Ngosso Din left secretly for Germany in ^{early} 1914. He met Halpert and another lawyer, Dr. Tilg, was sent to Douala. The lawyers and their clients clearly thought the whole expropriation could be cancelled even though the first phase had been carried out. But later Ngosso Din, after meeting Ebermaier in Germany, was back in Douala behind bars; this was apparently in July, and it seems that it was then, too, that Rudolf Bell himself was arrested.

The suspended Paramount Chief was charged with a plot to foment an uprising in conjunction with other chiefs in Kamerun. Njoya of Bamoun is said to have

betrayed the plan after receiving a letter calling on him to join Rudolf in the rising¹⁰⁵. The truth about the accusation is now hard to unravel¹⁰⁶. There are strong indications of either a frame-up or runaway suspicions; but Rudolf's defence counsel, Dr. Etscheit, believed he had been involved in a plot, and so, much later, did the scholars Brutsch¹⁰⁷ and Ghomsi¹⁰⁸. It is possible that he aimed at some sort of concerted action which was not necessarily an armed revolt. The Germans also arrested other protest leaders in Douala and two chiefs in the Mungo area¹⁰⁹.

On 1 August 1914 the First World War began; on 4 August Great Britain joined in. British, French and Belgian forces entered Kamerun across the land borders and a naval expedition to take Douala was soon planned. The crackdown on the Duala protest leaders probably began well before war seemed likely and cannot be attributed to panic over "security". That, however, might partly explain the conduct of the two trials held. Rudolf Bell and Ngosso Din were tried in secret in Douala on August 7, defended by the locally resident lawyer Etscheit as Tilg had left. They were quickly convicted and sentenced to death. Dr. Etscheit, Mandessi Bell and others appealed for a reprieve, but Ebermaier said that in war conditions the alternative penalty, banishment, was impossible.

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105. P.J.-R.B. (Pastor Jean-René Brutsch), "Autour du Procès de Rudolf Duala Manga," *Etudes Camerounaises* no.51, March 1956.
 106. Writings on the case include René Bell, *op.cit.*, especially the part in *L'Effort Camerounais* 24 Jan.1960; P.J.-R.B. *op.cit.*; Albert Bebe Bell, *op.cit.*; unpublished MS by Alexandre Douala Manga Bell in papers of Léopold Moume Etia.
 107. P.J.-R.B., *op.cit.*
 108. E. Ghomsi, *op.cit.*
 109. René Bell, *loc.cit.*

At 4 p.m. on 8 August 1914 Rudolf Duala Manga Bell and Ngosso Din were hanged at the central police station at Bonanjo¹¹⁰. Ebermaier made a fierce, indeed hysterical proclamation announcing the execution¹¹¹. Possibly he and his administration thought the Dualas could be cowed into standing by the Germans against the Allies. Such an idea could explain the executions – on the same day as Duala Manga's, according to tradition – of Ludwig Mpondo Dika and the Boulou chief Martin Samba. Mpondo Dika was said to have been shot without trial at Ngaoundere, but no announcement was made¹¹². The unconcealed execution of Rudolf Bell aroused shock and horror. To this day he is a hero whose story is taught to all Cameroonian schoolchildren. Dualas remember him as a martyr in the cause of his people's ancestral land.

The trial of the other alleged plotters began on 14 Aug. 1914 at Great Soppo outside Buea. Some people accused of high treason were acquitted, and some evidence was produced, which suggests that the trial was not simply rigged, though the court may have been swayed by feelings aroused by the war. Tokoto Essome was sentenced to life imprisonment; Missipo Mouloby, Ekande Epanya and Kwele Ndoumbe to ten years; Lobe Manga Priso to eight years; Njembele Ekwe and Pastor Modi Din to five years. The purge of the dissident Bonadoo elite leaders can only have added to the feelings aroused by the executions. Many Dualas fled, as some were already said to have done, as far as Nigeria, after the expropriation.

110. V. Noël, *op.cit.*

111. P.J.-R.B., *op.cit.*

112. M. Doumbe-Mouloungou, "le Ngondo", p.52

The Allied Occupation.

Douala was a major objective of the Allies in the campaigns against the German colonies¹¹³. An Allied expeditionary force was assembled under the overall command of Brig.-Gen. Charles Dobell, Inspector-General of the Royal West African Frontier Force. He was supported by a Royal Navy squadron under Captain Cyril Fuller, who took H.M.S. Cumberland and Dwarf to Suellaba on 10 Sept.¹¹⁴ The British forces consisted of three battalions of infantry of four companies each, two artillery batteries of eight pieces, plus services, ambulances, engineering and railway sections, transport and commissariat sections, and the naval section; nearly all the troops were West Africans, including 1 and 2 Nigeria Regt. of the RWAFF, or Indians. The French had a staff, two battalions of four companies each with machine guns, an artillery battery, an ammunition section, and engineering and railway sections; there were 55 officers, 354 European other-ranks, and 1,859 of the African soldiers called tirailleurs. The force arrived from Lagos at Suellaba on 23 Sept. and entered the Wouri estuary on 26 Sept., navigating its way past eleven ships and many barges vainly sunk to stop them.

An initial attempt at landing was repulsed, but then, after an ultimatum and a very short bombardment

113. M. Perham, Lugard:II: The Years of Authority, p.528.

114. A. Haywood and F. Clarke, History of the Royal West African Frontier Force, p. 106.

(destroying the wireless station), the German forces at Douala surrendered on 27 Sept. 1914¹¹⁵. Apparently many of the Germans had left during the night; one Duala later recalled that his German employer had given out food to all his employees and told them to fend for themselves¹¹⁶. The Allies landed to find most of the Germans gone with the government files. There was some looting by Africans but Dobell later said it had been limited and quickly stopped; generally the Africans "behaved exceedingly well", he said¹¹⁷. He added that Dualas seemed pleased at the victory, and Dualas who were there confirm that there were celebrations in the town.

The British Administration.

There was then an Allied military administration, which in Douala was mainly British, though both British and French forces were stationed there. The British had come prepared to take over civilian duties. They brought a political officer, Major Elphinstone, and a financial officer, a pay office, intelligence officers, a customs service, a naval ports and roadsteads administration, and a supplies and transport officer¹¹⁸. Officials were

115. Report by General Dobell, 27 Sept. 1914, Box Cameroun Affaires Politiques II, Affaires Militaires I, Archives Nationales Section Outremer, Paris; Report on administration of French Cameroun to 1 July 1921, appendix to Journal Officiel de la République Française 1921, p.415ff.; A. Burns, History of Nigeria, p.226.

116. Interview, Alfred Etame Dika.

117. Further report by Dobell, 6 Oct. 1914, Box Cameroun Affaires Politiques II, Affaires Militaires I, Archives Nationales Section Outremer, Paris.

118. Report on the administration of French Cameroun to 1 July 1921 (see note 115)

seconded for conquered areas of Kamerun from Nigeria, and also from French Equatorial Africa. Dobell ran the administration of the occupied areas from the official residence at Bonanjo, which he called in his despatches "Government House, Duala". Lugard, Governor-General of Nigeria, visited Douala in Nov. 1914 and on 1 April 1915 the Colonial Office took over the running of the British side of the occupation regime.

Douala was on the world stage now. It was the rear base for the inland operations against the Germans. Already it entered prominently into discussions about the future of the German colonies, with Lugard and other British figures anxious to secure Douala's fine harbour for Britain¹¹⁹. The Dualas may well have supported that idea; they knew the British well and spoke their language, and the British attitude to chiefs probably pleased them in principle.

Dika Mpondo, "King Akwa", returned in triumph to Douala and was restored to his throne. But the French later said the British had given a sort of supremacy over all the Dualas, and a good deal of power, to the ruler of Bell. If so, this was no doubt because the Bonadoo would be good helpers for the short-staffed British owing to their special resentment against the Germans. Prince Alexander was cut off in Germany. Pending his return Rudolf's brother Henry Lob'a Manga Bell was recognised as

119. Perham, *op.cit.*, p.544; W.R. Louis, Great Britain Britain and Germany's Lost Colonies, *passim*.

Paramount Chief by his people and the British. Another Paramount Chief, the veteran Kum'a Mbape, is said to have possibly died under the British administration; this would have pleased him, but the date is uncertain.

Among the troops stationed at Douala were Gold Coast men whose camp was in a Benadoo area called Koumassi in memory of them. Near there, in Bali, the forces were given some land for the duration of the war by the Bells. They later recalled this when arguing that the inhabitants of Bali had been evicted then, not in the German expropriation. Whatever the truth of this, the temporary British administration could do nothing about the land question, especially as the Germans had taken the land registry records (Grundbücher) away with them.

Douala government officials who knew English or Pidgin helped Dobell's administration — Doo Dayas, Albert Bebe Bell, Isaac Moume Etia, Ekal'a Pidi. But at least one Kanzlist, Albert Mpondo Dika, retreated with the Germans and worked for their temporary administration at Yaounde¹²⁰. During their hard-fought retreat the Germans took with them at least two of the gaoled Bell leaders, Tokoto Essome and Modi Din. Yaounde fell on 1 January 1916 and in February 1916 all German resistance ended. The main German force, including 6,000 African soldiers and thousands of African civilians, retreated into Rio Muni.

120. Interview, Albert Mpondo Dika.

Albert Mpondo Dika took charge of the convoy taking his office's money there. He returned to Douala then, as did Tokoto Essome and Modi Din, who were released. Probably not many Dualas were among those who remained with the Germans, though the Dualas were cut off from many other sons, those in Germany, until 1918. For the authorities in Douala the Germans who had retreated into Spanish Guinea, and who included Ebermaier, remained a cause for concern, as the neutral Spanish authorities moved them to Fernando Po and did not intern them very strictly.

The completion of the conquest of Kamerun reduced the military activity which had no doubt benefited Douala's people in many ways. The peacetime activity of Douala had largely come to a halt. The harbour was blocked with sunk craft, though the Royal Navy refloated some and removed mines. British army engineers repaired war damage to the railways, but railway traffic and shipping were far below pre-war levels. Douala, however, was hardly damaged, and much of the infrastructure built by the Germans was kept going, though it was later said that the sharing of the telephone system between the British and French forces led to an "inexpressible chaos"¹²¹.

Africans suffered from the war in many ways. Many must have lost jobs, at least after the reduction of military activity. Dualas' plantations had often to be abandoned or used only for crops for local use or sale, as exports declined greatly. Normal imports for Africans

121. Report on administration of French Cameroun (see note 115), p.445.

became scarce. The mark, which remained in circulation, must have fallen greatly in value. Education ground to a halt, for all missionaries except the Baslers Bender (a German-American) and Rhode (an Australian) were deported from Kamerun, and there was little money available for African teachers. But despite the lack of money and other obstacles African churchmen strove hard to keep some religious activities going; the Native Baptist Church did not even feel the departure of missionaries, while Duala pastors of the Protestant Missions kept on some Church activities¹²²; the Catechist Mbangué, and Allied army chaplains, did the same for the Catholics of Douala¹²³.

Trade, on which the town depended, did not come to a complete halt. All German firms were closed and their properties placed in Allied custody*. But British firms went on working; Rudolph Doumbe-Mouloby, a younger brother of Missipo Mouloby, began working for John Holt at this time¹²⁴. The Bank of British West Africa started a branch at Akwa in 1915; it was to remain, as a monument of the British administration, until it closed in 1974.

Other relics of that administration are a small war memorial at Bonanjo and the names of streets called after King George, Kitchener, the ships Ivy and Dwarf, etc.

* Their confiscation was formally gazetted by the French later, possibly following recovery of the German Grundbücher.

122. van Slageren, op.cit., p.130ff.; F. Grob, op.cit., Chapter on Modi Din.

123. Interview, Benoît Mbangué.

124. Interview, Doumbe-Mouloby.

The British Leave.

But the British administration was not to last long. Despite all the demands made for Britain to keep Douala and perhaps the country as far as the Sanaga, the discussions on the provisional partition of Kamerun led to an agreement to give almost the whole territory to France, including Douala¹²⁵.

On 1 April 1916 General Dobell and his staff pulled out of Douala. In the place of the British came the French, much more alien to the Dualas. The partition of the conquered German territory was in theory only temporary, and many Dualas thought it might be revised by the final peace settlement or, of course, by a German victory.

General J. Aymérich, who had commanded the operational forces in the conquest, now moved into the official residence at Bonanjo, as "Commissioner of the French Republic in the Occupied Territories of former Cameroun*." Thus, on 1 April 1916, two generations of French rule began in Douala.

* This French spelling is used hereafter for the French-ruled territory. The modern state is called "Cameroon", that being the official English spelling.

125. Louis, op.cit., passim.

CHAPTER TWO

THE DUALAS AND THE FRENCH, 1916 TO 1920:

WAR, PEACE AND PROTEST

By 1916 the Dualas had gone through profound changes in a generation of colonial rule. The detailed study of the German period in the last chapter was necessary to show how their development which was to continue under French rule had already gone far before then.

The outstanding fact revealed in the first generation of colonial rule was the Dualas' skill and readiness in adapting themselves, seizing on new opportunities to retain their wealth and their influence and power over tribes of the nearby hinterland. In doing so they maintained a critical attitude to the colonial power; it remained persistent despite that power's great strength, and was ultimately based on a belief that they had made a two-sided bargain in 1884.

Their position as controllers of the produce trade could not continue after the expansion of colonial rule and the firms' operations over a large area. But if they no longer controlled trade, Dualas were still involved in it. They were involved above all, from about the turn of the century, as planters. By 1914 an increasing proportion of Kamerun's exports consisted of cocoa and palm products from Dualas' plantations. Many Dualas made good money in this way, but the effects of their turning

to plantations went further.

The hegemony of the Bell and Akwa Dualas over neighbouring tribes was continued from the 19th century and even reinforced, with Deido people also obtaining a share. The Bonadoo and Bonaku could no longer send expeditions to subdue those tribes; but the continued enslavement of some of them by Dualas of all three left-bank sections had the at least tacit approval of the new rulers, which must have ensured submission. However, there is no evidence that employment on the Dualas' plantations was harsh, or that the employers lost anything by the gradual loss (apparently after 1914) of the labourers' servile status.

The continued exercise of both criminal and civil jurisdiction by Duala chiefs was vital for their domination of the Sawa and Bassa peoples nearby. While the courts could not handle all cases, the Germans' recognition of their power reinforced the Dualas' hegemony. The chiefs' attitude to the Germans was typical of the Dualas: they collaborated to some extent, obtained considerable power in return, and continued even so to criticise the colonial regime.

Other Dualas not only acted like the chiefs, but followed them. The continued high standing of the "Kings" and other chiefs in the community is beyond doubt; the role of Duala Manga in the land case was the outstanding example. References to actions by "the Dualas" are no mere shorthand. There was a definite common attitude discernible, and it may not have been due to

numerous similar individual choices. Known instances of concerted action, such as the land expropriation protest and the earlier Akwa protests, may well have been part of a normal process of concerting the attitudes of a small community towards the Germans.

The planters followed the general policy: limited collaboration to obtain advantages. They helped the development of the colonial economy, and in so doing made the colonial rulers partly dependent on them.

In a different way the clerks followed the same policy. They had to obey orders from white men, but in practice could wield considerable power over other Africans, coming between them and the administrator. In areas under traditional Duala influence the prestige of the Dualas must have been raised still further by the government clerks, the firms' clerks, and Duala traders. Further inland other tribes made their first contact with the Dualas as the subordinate but important agents of the white man.

There was no levelling of distinctions between Dualas and others at all; possibly they were enhanced. Their early lead in education may have had that effect. It could not last, as the Missions, who ran most schools, steadily expanded their work inland; but at first Dualas had the lion's share of the schooling which gave access to power under the new dispensation. That they adopted Christianity and sought education with a view to expected advantages can be assumed, without doubting the sincerity of conversion which produced many fervent Christians.

The conversion to Christianity took place largely in the German period and was a major transformation. It had many social effects including the eventual spread of the monogamous nuclear family, though polygamy persisted for long and was the main point of resistance to the Missions. Monogamy and the emancipation of slaves implied considerable social change, but the missionaries neither intended nor achieved more change than that. Even the freeing of slaves was gradual and largely involved the adoption of former slaves into the community of free Dualas. It does not seem to have caused any disruption. Dualas could still employ more or less servile workers on their plantations, and in the town they had limited needs for slaves, though fishermen may still have used slave crews for their canoes for some time. Even before 1884 slaves had benefited by the extensive spread of wealth from the produce trade. Among free men the development of individual initiative seems to have occurred before 1884 also (if it had not always existed). After then the initiatives were simply turned in new directions. But while individuals did well as traders, planters, clerks and urban landlords, this was without any apparent breakdown in communal feeling and solidarity.

The continued unity of the Dualas amid all their varied and, at a superficial glance, individualistic adaptations to colonial rule is striking. It was shown above all in the 1911-14 expropriation case. The Germans correctly noted the gains made by Dualas from the rising value of their land — another example of positive taking

advantage of the new situation. But even though individuals effectively owned, and leased or sold, some urban land, the idea of land as being communal still held, and the resistance to the expropriation was a communal one. It was very strong because the Germans were striking at one of the bases of the Dualas' power, having rather preserved those bases until then.

The eventual expropriation of Bonanjo was thus a severe blow to the Dualas. Further action was halted by the eviction of the Germans in 1914, and the Dualas were not reconciled to the setback. Their defiant spirit was revived by the events of 1914 and later. The resistance to the land seizure and the martyrdom of Rudolf Bell reinforced ~~the~~ the decidedly unsubmissive attitude which had always been there. In their opposition to the government Dualas were largely on their own, and the idea of opposing colonial rule in the name of a larger area than their traditional one may not have developed far by 1914. But there are signs that it was starting, and that the Dualas who after 1914 believed that they had a right to decide on their future may not have been thinking always of the Duala tribe alone.

The belief that the situation of Kamerun, or of Douala, was now negotiable again was a major consequence of the expulsion of the colonial rulers who had decisively influenced the Dualas but had turned them into bitter enemies at the end. The Dualas' early reactions to French rule followed easily from that belief.

Dualas faced their new rulers from a position of strength by comparison with other Africans. The attitude to foreigners – cool and critical, with an eye to any advantage that they might offer – was one source of strength. The need for their services as junior office staff was another, and they were to be helped by the very slow postwar recovery of education among other tribes. Yet another, perhaps the most important at first, was the vital contribution of the Duala planters to the economy. If it was not yet apparent in 1916 because of the wartime trade recession, it soon became so. A major factor helping to make the Duala planters even more necessary to the French was the exclusion of the European-owned plantations around Mount Cameroun from the French zone.

Early French Administration.

The French administration until 1919 was a make-shift semi-military one because of wartime exigencies. Bound under the Hague Convention to maintain most German laws, the French also used much of the German administrative structure, including official buildings and even notepaper, as well as the local administrative set-up. The French Circonscriptions, of which nine were created in 1916, roughly corresponded to the old Bezirke. Douala was the centre of one¹. It was also the seat of

1. P. Chauleur (ed.), L'Oeuvre de la France au Cameroun, p.25-6.

government for French-administered Kamerun/Cameroun.

Aymerich was succeeded as Commissioner on 5 Sept. 1916 by a civilian, Lucien Fourneau. In other ways, also, normal French colonial administration was gradually introduced even before the Armistice. Like French colonies, French-occupied Cameroun was ruled from the Ministry of the Colonies in Paris, under legislation largely made by the President of the Republic through *Décrets*. The Commissioner, like a Governor in a colony, issued *Arrêtés* (Ordinances) to give local force to decrees and apply other measures. Lesser ordinances issued by him were called Decisions. To record, and give force to, these enactments French Cameroun had its Journal Officiel (gazette) from 1 Nov. 1916, printed in Douala.

For many purposes French Cameroun was at first attached to French Equatorial Africa (AEF), but its separate status was respected. Because their administration was in theory temporary and in practice short-staffed, the French applied their rule relatively lightly until 1919. They retained, under a Decree of 12 January 1917, the "Mixed Courts" headed by chiefs, which were contrary to French colonial ideas, chiefs having been forbidden to hold criminal courts in AEF and French West Africa (AOF) since 1912. The same decree set up "Native Courts" headed by Europeans with African assessors². Similar courts had existed under the Germans and the changes were minor.

2. Report to the Minister of Colonies on the Administration of the Occupied Territories of Cameroun from the Conquest until 1 July 1921, appendix (dated 7 Sept. 1921) to Journal Officiel de la République Française, p. 417. This important source is hereafter cited as "Report ... until 1 July 1921".

But besides this judicial system the French also extended to Cameroun their general system of summary justice for "natives", the Code de l'Indigénat, which is probably remembered with more hatred than any other feature of French colonial rule. It allowed ordinary European administrative officers to punish without trial a number of offences by Africans, the first list of which, in an Arrête of 14 March 1917, included disorderly acts, vagrancy, refusal to give help in case of accident or riot or the arrest of a criminal or delinquent, false rumours liable to disturb the peace, and adulteration of produce.³

The list shows the preoccupation of the French with controlling the people as tightly as possible, partly to extract from them the work and services commonly required of Africans in all colonies, such as compulsory portage and other forced labour. More will be said in later pages about these impositions. From the first the French added to them an attempt to control African movements rigidly. This was to be maintained for the next 30 years and was a major theme in the history of the growth of Douala. It seems to have begun with the 1917 Arrê[^]té which made moving from one's Circonscription of origin without permission an Indigénat offence.

The new administration initially decided to abolish all taxes on Africans except the head-tax normal in colonial territories. The rate for this was fixed on 30 Dec. 1916 at 10 francs per year, the French franc being

3. Journal Officiel du Cameroun (hereafter cited as JOC), 1 Oct. 1917.

now in circulation, alongside marks and sterling at first. There were some reductions later, and only in the Douala, Edea and Bare Circonscriptions was the full rate charged.⁴ An official report said instructions to the Chefs de Circonscription* in the early French period included "a formal order not to demand from the natives more than was necessary to mark the sign of submission to our administration"⁵.

For enforcement of their laws and impositions the French had a few troops and police, with European officers with both. Douala had one of the eleven companies of the initial garrison of the army. The special pre-occupations of the French in Douala were shown early on in several ways, including the appointment of a Central Police Commissioner for the Douala urban area alone**.

The Town in Wartime.

Douala in 1916 was one of the bigger newly-developed colonial seaport towns in West Africa. Its smart half-Europeanised appearance impressed Europeans who saw it, such as General Aymérich and Dr. Gustave Martin, a French medical officer.

Martin called Douala the finest colonial city in Africa, noting its "European districts, and even native

* This was the title of the officials heading the Circonscriptions.

** A less senior French police officer at this time, Commissioner Blat (known to have been appointed on 7 April 1916), is popularly remembered for acts of sadism, accusations not verifiable from available documents.

4. Reportuntil 1 July 1921, p.419; 428.

5. Reportuntil 1 July 1921, p.422.

ones, pierced by long wide avenues, well shaded⁶. From the river a traveller saw first from his ship "a brown cliff with trees from which there emerge European houses: the hospital, the Governor's residence, officials' and businessmen's homes". This was the Joss Plateau, sloping down to the shore where there were European "factories", naval installations and warehouses, and the Customs house. There were no harbour installations then by the Akwa and Deido beaches, except for wharves built by firms near their warehouses for the landing of barges and light craft⁶.

Martin noted that some German plans for Douala had been cut short by the war⁷; some had been connected with the expropriation plan, which he thought should be continued. Aymérich, like Martin, admired the work done by 1914 in modernisation. Describing in his memoirs (1933) a visit in 1915, the general wrote, "A rapid visit to the waterworks, the naval arsenal, to the mechanical sawmill, to the brickworks, forced us to pay our respects to the considerable work carried out in their time by the Germans, and to appreciate the worthy efforts of General Dobell, accompanied by a numerous technical staff, to avoid interruption of his predecessors' work"⁸.

Martin recommended Bonanjo as a very pleasant quarter for Europeans: "The effect of the beauty of the European quarter is a very happy one. Vast houses made of

6. G. Martin, L'Existence au Cameroun, 1921, p. 48-9.

7. *ibid.*, p. 52.

8. Aymérich, La Conquête du Cameroun, p. 111-3.

stone or cement, surrounded by verandahs perhaps a little too narrow, big trees whose branches spread out horizontally in tiers to give shade to the long avenues, the big place du gouvernement with its circular bandstand, the big space surrounding the house of the former native king Manga Bell, the European-style hotel with electric lighting, give a feeling of calm and spaciousness to the Bell district, a garden city, in spite of some metal-sheeting huts which will disappear in the end. Fallen leaves along the avenues, grass which is growing up again everywhere, add to this impression; and in the evening, when the natives have returned to their districts and there remain only some Europeans' house-boys, Douala looks more like a rather empty watering-place at the end of the season, than a colonial town"⁷. He was describing just the effects intended for the benefit of colonial types like him by the German expropriation.

The Government House visited by Aymérich in 1915 was occupied by him in the following year and then by later Commissioners until 1921, when the seat of government was moved to Yaounde. Other German buildings were also useful to the new administration, as Aymérich, who had had his operational headquarters in the Baptist Mission building in Akwa, noted⁹. German properties were thus occupied and used well before the question of their ownership could be settled, as it could not be until

9. *ibid.*, p. 195.

the peace settlement. All German property was under the control of the Administrateur-Séquestre, the Custodian of Enemy Property, with public bodies or individuals having rights of usage. Gazette notices issued later during the disposal of that property, which took several years, showed the considerable extent of German companies' and individuals' properties; Woermann's covered several pages¹⁰.

A considerable part of the town was in the hands of the Custodian of Enemy Property. It included the property of all the Missions which had been forced to close in 1914. It also included the expropriated Joss plateau, and apparently the Bali plateau also, although the position of this seems obscure, as will be explained below. Joss, at least, was officially treated as German property duly placed under the control of the Custodian.

Douala's built-up area was scattered over a large stretch of the left bank and part of the opposite right bank; open bush separated the areas near the left bank from New-Bell, and penetrated to the river bank. Frank Christol, one of the first of the new missionaries sent to Douala in 1917, wrote, "Douala is not, properly speaking, a city, like Dakar for example. Nowhere are real groups of houses found. The streets are really shady roads with houses buried here and there in the greenery. This scattered building means that the town of Douala extends over a large district, and the bicycle really comes into its own in the town when one wants to go from one end to another"¹¹.

10. JOC 1 Feb. 1922, 1 March 1922, 15 Oct. 1922.

11. Journal des Missions Evangéliques, second half of 1917, p. 92-3.

The number of European-style houses built by Africans before 1914 was noted by Martin¹². Most of the Africans had houses (often quite strongly built) of reinforced mud, or wood, or corrugated iron or other metal sheeting. Martin said such houses were well spaced out in the Douala residential areas but immigration of Strangers from other parts of Cameroun and other colonies was causing greater density in Akwa and New-Bell¹³.

African life had acquired some Western appearances for several decades and the French found themselves faced in Douala with a coastal people familiar with things European, comparable in some ways to coastal peoples they already ruled in Gabon and Dahomey, but different in others. The general tendency of coastal elite people to follow Western fashions in dress was found. Dr. Martin said clerks in Deido and New-Bell were "proud to wear, on Sundays and feast-days, a spotlessly white stiff collar, a well-cut jacket, and a false Panama hat or German felt-hat with a greenish tinge"; the lucky ones wore glasses too¹⁴. Fashions were to change later.

The clerks' life-style was probably well beyond the means of most Africans and life for the majority was poor, but less so than in other parts of Cameroun because of the more plentiful money and goods available (though less so in wartime) and the greater attention paid to such

12. Martin, op.cit., p. 363.

13. ibid., p. 52, 362-3.

14. ibid., p. 52.

amenities as good drinking water and drains by the Germans, and to medical treatment by them and the French. French rule provided some free medical services for Africans from as early as 1916, when the Assistance Médicale Indigène (AMI) system was introduced. However, under an Arrêté of 2 Dec. 1916 free treatment was not automatic, it had to be justified by special considerations in each case; so that it may not have been widely available in practice, at least at that time. The AMI regulations, however, were to be often reformed.

Although there was a good drainage system covering most of the town apart from Bali, the waterfront area and a few other districts¹⁵, Douala's health problems were considerable then and later, partly because of its climate and malarial surroundings. There were rivers, swamps and creeks around, and the heavy rains filled the streets for months with water suitable for larvae breeding, so that the main task of the Douala Hygiene Service established on 13 July 1916, to ensure "enforcement of all measures designed to prevent formation of stagnant water accumulations liable to become breeding grounds for mosquito larvae"¹⁶, was very difficult – and an occasion for constant harassment of the Africans.

The main hospitals for Europeans and Africans in 1916 were two groups of buildings, segregated but only a few yards apart, built by the Germans at Bonanjo near the

15. *ibid.*, p. 376-9.

16. *ibid.*, p. 344.

river; 50 beds were available for Europeans and 200 for Africans¹⁷.

The War and the Economy.

Local trade, including the running of the firms' stores, small shops and market stalls, is among the least well documented features of life at this time in Douala. There are references, however, to the main market, which was by the old Ngondo beach and the Central Railway terminus. About 1920 this was mentioned as being used mainly by petty retailers selling sugar, cigarettes, paraffin and other imported goods, and by vendors of local fish and food crops on certain days¹⁸. Regulations on it were made from an early date, including an important Arrêté on 31 December 1918. It forbade selling of goods for local use in Douala by itinerant traders or temporary stall keepers except in the market and at places designated by the Chef de Circonscription as secondary markets. Fees for retail trade stalls were fixed then: 5 francs per month for sales of poultry, game and fish; 10 for sales of imported goods, butcher's meat and a few other items; 2 for sales of certain food such as cassava flour, eggs and vegetables¹⁹. It is impossible to assess the number of small retailers; besides those who paid for trade licenses there were probably many others who evaded attempts

17. *ibid.*, p. 93-5.

18. *ibid.*, p. 369.

19. JOC 1 March 1919.

to regulate this major West African activity.

The foreign import-export firms such as Holt and King traded through the more important African retailers. Before the end of the War these included many Africans from other colonies, including Dahomey and Gold Coast, as well as Dualas. Besides such storekeepers and agents of the firms, there was an influx of somewhat different Hausa traders to Douala. Several hundred came, the first coming possibly in the wake of the RWAFF, to add to the colony already there. They lived in their own special areas in Akwa and New-Bell, building straw huts. Ever since then the Hausas have remained an important immigrant community in Douala. In 1917 their influx led to efforts to control their continued movements; they were told to obtain passports to be allowed to leave Nigeria²⁰.

Much of the food sold in Douala has always been grown nearby; some, at the period under review, by Dualas, in fields near their homes in the town; some by Dualas and Bassas nearby; some by Dualas on their plantations on the Wouri, Mungo and other rivers. The decline in cash crop exports may have encouraged planters, when those forced to stop farming by the war had restarted, to grow food crops instead of cocoa, continuing, probably, to produce palm oil and kernels for local trade and consumption. Fishing was probably unaffected by the war — the armed forces may indeed have provided a valuable new market for fish and other food — and sheep and goats were brought to Douala by the Hausas.

20. Circular by Fourneau, 17 August 1917, JOC 1 Sept. 1917.

But imported food became scarce. Other local effects of war conditions are harder to assess as they must have depended on the level of real incomes relative to pre-war years, which is very difficult to estimate as many incomes must have been reduced or altogether ended, while such regular wages as were still paid (e.g. to African clerks) may well have had an inflationary effect and the spending by troops almost certainly did so, and at the same time there must have been confusion over currency for years. The franc was introduced and in 1917 refusal to accept francs at their fixed value was made an Indigénat offence; but marks and sterling remained in circulation. The exchange rate for the mark was fixed at 75 centimes or 7d.²¹, but it must have been impossible to enforce such rates effectively.

Overseas trade never wholly stopped, despite the lack of shipping space, the U-boat menace and other difficulties, but it was greatly reduced and so was all activity dependent on it. The imported goods which still came in must have been to a considerable extent for consumption in or near Douala, and much of the residual produce export trade was the work of the Duala planters, of whom more shortly.

With the revival of trade before the Armistice, which became rapid in 1918, European firms revived or moved in. A recent study, apparently based on official documents but not quoting them, says there were 15

21. JOC 16 Dec. 1917.

"first-category" import-export enterprises in Douala in 1916²². As these were major firms of the class of Holt and Woermann, the figure seems strangely high, for there had been only 7 such firms operating in 1914 and most of these, being German, had been closed. But French firms did move in at an early stage. CFAO (Compagnie Française de l'Afrique Occidentale) soon became one of the major firms, with one of the most important general stores, in Douala. The Compagnie Forestière Sangha-Oubangui (CFSO), one of the notorious concessionary companies in AEF, established itself in Douala as an import-export firm, later creating the subsidiary Compagnie Commerciale Sangha-Oubangui (CCSO) for that side, besides having a big timber concession inland.

John Holt survived the war well and was still the most important of the big firms buying produce for export and selling European goods in Douala. R. & W. King also survived the war in Douala, but in 1918 it was taken over by Lever Bros., thus eventually becoming a part of the United Africa Company in 1929; it retained its name even after 1929 and still does. The local business of MacIver, another firm earlier taken over by Lever, was added to King's operations in French Cameroun²³. In 1919 Hatton & Cookson was taken over by the African and Eastern Trading Corporation, which was also to join UAC in 1929; until then Hatton & Cookson operated under its old name in Douala²⁴.

22. Gouellain, Douala, p. 197.

23. F. Pedler, The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa, p.154-5.

24. *ibid.*, p. 92.

If these British firms remained for a time the most important, French ones soon outnumbered those of other nationalities, though some were initially on a small scale. In June 1917, for example, the Etablissements Bougerolle et Berger was running an import-export business and a hotel and restaurant in Douala; it was taken over then by a new Compagnie Franco-Africaine, whose representative in Douala was at first Robert Lombard, one of many Europeans who spent long periods in Douala. The work of such French businessmen was considered important enough for them to enjoy repeated deferments of military service. Besides Frenchmen a few Lebanese were starting businesses in Douala before 1918, including one destined to be very successful and well known there, Emile Nassif.

The influx of Europeans did not remove Africans altogether from any line of strictly trading business, even the top class of import-export trading. The leading Dualas in that line in 1916 were apparently David Mandessi Bell and Sam Deido. Mandessi Bell kept going well in the war years, when his money helped continue the work of the Protestant churches.

However, some lines of business were always run by Europeans, including the hotel business which soon revived, with the Kaiserhof reopened as the Grand Hôtel; and banking, represented in Douala in 1918 by the Banque de l'Afrique Equatoriale and the BBWA. In shipping the role of the Woermann Linie in passenger and goods transport to and from Douala was soon taken over by Chargeurs Réunis of Bordeaux. By 1917 its ships were calling regularly at Suellaba roads.

The volume of shipping, however, was then small; only 69 ships called at Douala in 1917, compared with 230 in 1913. The harbour was in a poor state when the French took over, with many boats lying idle and rotting and others still not salvaged after being sunk in the 1914 operations²⁵. Some of those were still lying in the estuary two decades later. But the French inherited many seaworthy craft such as the steamboats Haoussa and Foullah, used to ferry goods and passengers to and from the roads. In 1917 these boats were also making regular trips to Kribi and Campo. For harbour operations there were several motor-boats and, in 1916, 47 barges, mostly still in use a few years later but not all still at Douala.

The railways were by early 1917 running regularly to Nkongsamba and Eseka, twice a week each way on each line; the journey to Eseka took 11½ hours, the journey to Nkongsamba 9½ (the return, downhill, taking 8½). In 1916 the Central Railway and Northern Railway were carrying large amounts of goods and passengers, but much fewer than before 1914, though there was a big rise in goods traffic, indicating the economic revival, by 1918²⁶. To connect the two railway termini there was the Douala-Bonaberi ferry, a part of the city's everyday life until 1955.

Long before the post-war economic revival the work available at the town, and other factors, were drawing immigrants to Douala from the interior. This immigration would in 50 years make Douala a 95 per cent Strangers' city. In its early stages it was noted by

25. Report....until 1 July 1921, p.442-4.

26. Tables in Chauleur (ed.), op.cit.

the Catholic priest Fr. Douvry, who said Douala was "the administrative centre, the principal port, the terminus of innumerable migrations of natives from the interior..."²⁷. One immigrant to Douala, a Bassa blacksmith from the Makak area, later recalled having gone there about this time²⁸; then and for some time later Bassas and Betis were the most numerous Camerounian migrants to Douala. Better documented, at this time, was migration from other parts of Africa, especially Nigeria. They went to several parts of Douala including New-Bell, which was eventually to be the Strangers' quarter but not yet in 1918. The West African immigrants, apart from the Hausa petty traders, were mostly clerks with the firms, or retail traders under the firms; but there was an important group of Senegalese recruited by the government for clerical and skilled work.

The Dualas and the French.

From the start the role of the Dualas in French Cameroun was especially important. Like other West African coastal peoples with extensive Western education they were at the same time indispensable agents of the colonial administration, occupying many of the junior

27. J. Douvry, C.S.Sp., to Ministry of Colonies, Dec. 1916, Holy Ghost Fathers archives, Paris, Cameroun correspondence 1914-27.

28. Interview, Gabriel Libom.

staff positions for which such education was needed, and alert critics of the same administration. Their protests are an important feature of their history described in this thesis. However, to put it in perspective one must also note the Dualas' role as much-needed auxiliaries of the colonial administration. And their position vis-à-vis the French had other elements too.

Many Dualas who had been working as clerks and other junior officials of the German administration worked hard to learn enough French to do similar work for the new government. Some language classes for them were organised by Sergeant Charles Lalanne, released from war service to do this job and later officially commended for his classes/^{for}"Monitors", i.e. African junior schoolteachers. These were among the first African staff employed by the French, who must have been anxious to spread their own language because the Dualas were so widely literate in German, English and Duala. By early 1918 there were five government primary schools in Douala Circonscription²⁹. One Duala schoolteacher, Albert Mod'a Bebe Bell, started teaching in Douala as early as 19 April 1916, and learned French on the job. Later in 1916 he passed a French examination and became a government Monitor in Douala, where he was to work for 14 years. Max Mpacko, an Abo, started a life's career as a government schoolteacher after learning French at Douala in 1917.

Besides schoolteachers Duala clerks and skilled staff entered the service of the French very early.

29. JOC 1 Feb. 1918 and 1 March 1918.

An official report said the French had been pleased to be able to find staff for the postal services after two changes of government and habits, though the staff had abused their situation of indispensability³⁰. This statement reveals that for such junior government staff, largely Dualas at that time, dependence was mutual. They needed the jobs, but the government needed them. The considerable independence retained by the Dualas in the colonial context was partly due to that fact. The skilled workers among them did not always need to learn French; one railwayman recalled that he never learned it, though he remained with the railway until 1923³¹. But for skilled workers the French in the early years also recruited the Senegalese mentioned above. The most famous of these, Mamadou Diop, was a skilled ouvrier d'art at Douala harbour, who married into the top Duala elite by becoming the second husband of Maria Mandessi Bell.

Many Dualas did clerical work from the beginning, usually in the class of Clerk Interpreters, Ecrivains-Interprètes, which was established in an organised way in 1919 but had started before then. Isaac Moume Etia, after refusing an offer of a job in British Cameroons, worked for the first three Chefs de Circonscription in Douala, and in 1918 ran the whole Yabassi Subdivision^{*}

* The Subdivision was the unit of administration below the Circonscription.

30. Report....until 1 July 1921, p.447.

31. Interview, Alfred Etame Dika.

32

on his own for a while . Albert Mpondo Dika and Guillaume Jemba worked as teachers at first but then became two of the most famous Clerk-Interpreters. Among clerks of the Germans who did the same work for the French were Jacques Toco Moume and Felix Etame Joss, of Bell, and an even more prominent Bell man, Doo Dayas, brother-in-law of Rudolf Bell.

Robert Ebolo Bile was a teacher under the French as under the Germans, but although he eventually became a senior teacher at the Akwa government school and also worked as a railway clerk he was less famous as an official than as a timber concessionnaire, a Notable* of Akwa, and a leading supporter of France among the Dualas. Like him, many Dualas left government service for other work quite early. The official report already quoted lamented this in 1921, noting that in the postwar economic expansion the firms could pay more³⁰. This was not the only reason for leaving government service or not joining it. After their arrival in 1917 (of which more below) the new Christian Missions employed Duala teachers and catechists at very un-competitive salaries. Gottlieb Munz Dibundu, who worked for the newly established French firm of Taoubrel at Edea from 1917 to 1920, then left this relatively good job to work for the Protestant Mission, which eventually made him a pastor like his father and brother³³.

32. L. and A. Moume Etia, Notice Biographique sur la Vie de Monsieur Isaac Moume Etia, Douala 1940.

33. Notes on pastors and Christians of Douala by Pastor J.-R. Brutsch.

* This French term for tribal Elders is often used hereafter.

Many Dualas who had worked as Kanzlister for the Germans never took similar jobs for the French government or firms. These former employees of the Germans are often mentioned in the history of the Mandate period. Instead of seeking new office jobs they earned their living, above all, from plantations. Their possession of these helped the Dualas generally to maintain a relatively privileged position under the French, who needed their services not only as clerks but also as cocoa and oil palm growers. However, there was no need to choose between plantations and office jobs, for many clerks had their plantations. Why, one may ask, did some educated Dualas come to live off plantations, plus urban land rents and other non-wage income, rather than take office jobs as they had done before 1914?

Later there grew up a belief, still heard today, that the nationalists and protesters against French rule in the Mandate years, of whom much more will be heard in this study, were against the French because they had been barred from office jobs such as they had had in the German era³⁴. A look at the earliest years of French rule makes it impossible to accept this theory.

The French badly needed African staff, and many Dualas worked for them. There was no obvious difference between former Kanzlister who obtained jobs with the French and those who did not. All had the same initial language difficulty, which those who did work for the French overcame.

34. e.g. J. Suret-Canale, French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, p.455

The French would only have refused jobs to qualified applicants if they were unable to learn French, which is unlikely ever to have happened, or if they showed strong opposition to French rule, which probably did happen. The widespread opposition to the French among the Dualas extended to former clerks of the Germans, and those who had attracted notice by expressing such feelings might well be refused jobs. Many such people, however, would not even want those jobs. Some never even learned French, which suggests they refused on their own initiative to have anything to do with the new administration.

This seems the real explanation for the large class of former employees of the Germans who remained self-employed under the French. Lobe Manga Priso, who had left government service before 1914, never returned to it. Toto Ngosso, a prominent official of the German administration, never worked for the French. Nor, among other Bell Dualas, did Mudute Bell, Ekal'a Pidi or Njembele Ekwe. Among Akwa men Ferdinand Edinguele Meetom, his cousin Theodor Dikongue Meetom, and Peter Mukuri Dikongue were former Kanzlisten who never worked for the French government or French firms.

All these men clashed with the French government in the next twenty years. Mudute Bell, Lobe Manga Priso and Njembele Ekwe were prominent in the revived Bonadoo land agitation, and Edinguele Meetom may be rated the leading nationalist of the Mandate period. Other nationalists and opponents of French rule were, like these, in the large class of self-employed Notables living off business and trade, urban land rents, and above all cash crop plantations.

Typical was Daniel Siliki Same of Bonadibong, Akwa, an active nationalist owning many plantations.

It is because this class of Dualas was the centre of opposition to French rule in the Mandate period that the belief already cited — that Dualas opposed French rule because it had refused them good jobs — arose. The true explanation, beyond doubt, is that these people opposed French rule because they chose to do so from an early stage, and it was because of their deliberate attitude that they either failed to get, or more probably did not even seek, office jobs under the French.

Personal initiative is the only possible explanation of the varying attitudes of individual Dualas to French rule. Many who remained self-employed as businessmen and planters were very loyal to France, such as Ebolo Bile, after he left government service, and — on the whole — Erdmann Njo Eteki of Deido, a former Kanzlist who became a successful businessman. Other Dualas, as already noted, lived off non-wage income and strongly opposed the French. Some may have had a definite pro-German bias, if only of a nostalgic sort, as the French were always to allege. Other Dualas indicated such a bias by working for German firms or planters in Douala (e.g. Ekal'a Pidi), in Fernando Po (e.g. Dikongue Meetom) or in British Cameroons. Others, with apparently no such ideas, also emigrated permanently from Douala, notably Robert K.G. Dibongue of Akwa (1896-1974), who went to British Cameroons in 1918 and rose to be Assistant Chief Clerk in 1937. And many others who had had office jobs

under the Germans had them under the French.

But among all the varying responses to French rule there is a clearly discernible common attitude, of dislike and criticism. It emerges from all documents and reminiscences. If self-employed people were most free to express these feelings, others shared them in the early years of French rule, and later as well. Such feelings were a natural continuation of those of the Dualas before 1914, but they aroused the concern of the French from the beginning.

From the 1916 Incidents to the Armistice.

In their search for the reasons for Dualas' cool attitude to them the French were doubtless right to see uncertainty over the outcome of the war, in which a German victory in Europe would presumably bring the Germans back to Kamerun, as one. Many Dualas, also, had thought in 1914 that the Treaty of 1884 had expired, and others later thought that it could no longer govern them as the Germans, with whom they had made the Treaty, had been expelled. Thus there was a widespread feeling that the Dualas' future was now negotiable again. The uncertainty about the war was increased by the presence of the thousands of German soldiers, mostly Cameroonians, on Fernando Po, a potential threat which worried the French in Cameroun and the British in Nigeria.

While showing a certain amount of understanding of the Dualas' feelings³⁵ the French set quickly about

35. Annual Report for Douala Circonscription, 1916, quoted in Gouellain, op.cit., p.161-2.

reducing them to a more submissive state. They did so by attacking the power of the paramount chiefs, an obvious focus of independent feelings. The French felt that Lobe Bell, in particular, had been given too much power by the British, even recognition of some sort of supremacy over the Dualas³⁶. One of their earliest decisions was therefore to treat the four paramount chiefs on an equal footing. This was only a reversion to German policy, and French moves were limited. Their aversion to the role assumed by the Dualas' traditional rulers fitted in with their general prejudices as shown in Africa, but they had to move cautiously because of the provisional nature (in theory) of their rule, their lack of staff and troops, and their need of the Dualas' support and help.

A serious clash occurred, however, soon after Aymérich moved into Government House. It was in Akwa, not Bell. Dualas recall that African soldiers, apparently of the Tirailleurs Sénégalais, ill-treated Akwa people and provoked a riot. This is credible enough; the troops possibly thought of Douala as occupied territory. Apparently some Dualas started hitting back in some way or other at the soldiers, who then opened fire and killed several people. One detailed tradition says a man named Musinga called for help when being manhandled by soldiers at night, and the old Paramount Chief, Tete Dika Mpondo, told people to go and help him; they did, and a fight ensued in which more troops came; the soldiers, it is

36. *ibid.*; Gouellain, New-Bell Douala, Douala 1956, p.29.

said, ended by beating the Paramount Chief, who was probably in his 70s³⁷.

Whatever happened there was certainly a serious clash, and immediately afterwards Dika Mpondo was arrested and deported to Campo, where he had already been deported by the Germans. Once again, as on that occasion, his son Diboussi Akwa – exiled to Bell territory by the British in the interval – was appointed in his place. Another son, Din Akwa, was sentenced to three years' imprisonment by the Douala District Court on 2 May 1916, presumably as a result of the disturbances³⁸. Other sentences were probably passed.

The April 1916 clash may have had something to do with the position of the paramount chiefs; the French government had thought Dika Mpondo, misinterpreting the downgrading of Lobe Bell, had tried to assume for himself the paramountcy over all the Dualas³⁹.

A few months after being sent to Campo Tete Dika Mpondo, alias King Akwa, died there on 6 Dec. 1916. There was long mourning in Akwa for one of the most distinguished "Kings" in Duala history. The French, who had banished him, sent a warship to bring his body back for burial.

Diboussi Akwa remained effective ruler but probably many Akwas did not fully recognise him because of

37. Interviews, Rodolphe Doumbe-Mouloby, Albert Mpondo Dika, Douala.

38. JOC 1 Dec. 1918.

39. L.Moume Etia, Sites Historiques de Douala, 2, p.31; Gouellain, Douala, p.161.

uncertainty about the fate of the heir apparent, the talented Ludwig Mpondo Dika. It is fairly certain that he was killed in 1914, but the confusion of the following years gave reasonable cause for uncertainty; in 1919 a Nigerian sailor who drifted up in British Guiana and started collecting money there by claiming to be an African prince apparently said he was "Mpondo Akwa"⁴⁰.

If some Akwa people expected the return of a lost heir to the throne, all Bell people did so. Henry Lobe Bell was accepted as Paramount Chief only provisionally, pending the return of Alexandre Ndoumb'a Douala Manga Bell*. Meanwhile, for all the strong resentment that must have existed in Akwa, the French reported that opposition to them was centred on Bell. This was no doubt due to recent memories of the land expropriation and the execution of Rudolf. Resentment over the lost land on the Joss plateau was maintained by the occupation of the land by the Allies. The French held on to the land, and were to do so even after the peace treaty removed the restrictions probably placed on property transactions in wartime under the Hague Convention. From the first the French held that the area had legally become German government property, so that they could occupy it provisionally before the treaty and then inherit it legally. From the first the Bonadoo refused to accept this.

* To use the French spelling used hereafter.

40. Minister of Foreign Affairs to Minister of Colonies, Paris, 23 March 1921, in file 7, Box Cameroun Affaires Politiques 29 & 30, Archives Nationales Section Outremer, Paris.

The position of the Bali plateau, however, is unclear. The German expropriation measures there may have been cut short, or may not even have started, before the Allied occupation. Some Bonadoo property owners possibly never left Bali. Others who had been moved to New-Bell left there in 1916-17⁴¹, and although Martin⁴² suggested that some might have returned to Joss, most probably went to Bali.

The rebellious mood among the Bonadoo led to calls for self-determination or self-government, which some other Dualas echoed. Dualas who believed that the 1884 Treaty had been a genuine treaty which had either expired in 1914 or become void through the removal from the scene of one of the parties to it would naturally demand at least consultation over their future, which they felt was now an open question again. This demand was widely expressed. It was a considerable step to go further and demand self-government, but many Dualas did so. They often looked for inspiration to independent Liberia.

Doo Dayas was said to be calling for independence like that of Liberia in 1916⁴³. In spite of that he was employed by the French as an interpreter at Douala Circonscription and continued to be employed by them until his death a few years later, no doubt because they knew that many Dualas agreed with him, as Fourneau was to admit in 1919. Presumably such people saw the Dualas in the role

41. Gouellain, Douala, p. 159.

42. See above, and note 7.

43. Chef de Circonscription, Douala, to Commissioner, 31 May 1919, quoted (no archival reference given) in Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p.172.

of Americo-Liberians, and the French had some reason to accuse them of wanting to continue or extend their hegemony over other tribes. But it is not clear what area the proposed state like Liberia would cover; a difficulty in the interpretation of Duala protests is that "Cameroun" could mean either the Dualas' homeland originally called so and covered by the 1884 Treaty, or the territory to which the name was extended, or both.

Another Duala calling for a self-governing state like Liberia was Toto Ngosso, who was said to have been aggrieved by unjust treatment by Police Commissioner Blat⁴⁴. Diboussi Akwa, though the nominee of the French, turned out to have similar views, and so did a brother of Ekwalla Epee, Paramount Chief of Deido. It was common for anti-colonial activists then to be inspired by the example of Liberia, and Dualas probably knew a lot about that country.

At the time of the Armistice half the Duala chiefs were said to support the idea of the Dualas having a say in their post-war future⁴⁴. Clearly there was a widespread state of feeling shared by paramount chiefs. From then on a remarkable degree of agreement among chiefs and other Dualas, including the most educated, was to be constantly noted.

The French, while accusing the chiefs of misusing

44. Commissioner to Governor-General of AEF, Douala 22 Jan. 1919, in Box Cameroun Affaires Politiques II 28, Archives Nationales Section Outremer, Paris. Hereafter "Affaires Politiques" is abbreviated "AP" and "Archives Nationales Section Outremer" is abbreviated "Archives SOM".

their judicial powers⁴⁵, originally decided, as already noted, to let them retain their "Mixed Courts" under the decree of 12 January 1917 on "Native Justice". Such courts were allowed only in the Douala, Edea and Yaounde Circonscriptions, which had respectively nine, three and one of them.⁴⁶ A separate Arrêté on 21 April 1917, following one on 23 February promulgating the main decree, restricted the powers of the courts⁴⁷. But chiefs' criminal jurisdiction did continue for some years, probably beyond the limits laid down.

The chiefs' courts were one means for Duala chiefs to continue their traditional supremacy over some Bassas and other non-Dualas. The French were probably against this from the beginning, but some years passed before they took action. While French policy towards chiefs had been made plain before 1919, and very probably encouraged Duala criticism of the new rulers, that criticism can be attributed mainly to the other causes mentioned.

The French took trouble to study the Dualas' dissident feelings. One report attributed the Dualas' attitudes partly to the policies on chieftancy of the Germans and the British; but its view that the Germans had encouraged too many petty chiefdoms seems fanciful.⁴⁸ It claimed that trade had spoiled the Dualas and encouraged their worst traits and worst elements; this was to be a standard French view of the Dualas. It also suggested

45. Report by Fourneau on 30 Dec. 1916, quoted in Gouellain, op.cit., p.160-6.

46. Report....until 1 July 1921, p. 418.

47. Chauleur (ed.), loc.cit.

48. Douala Circonscription Annual Report 1916, quoted in Gouellain, op.cit., p.160-6.

that modern development had gone too fast under the Germans and left the Dualas disoriented⁴⁸. These and other observations showed that the French did not understand the new phenomenon which the Dualas were for them. There is no reason to suppose that Dualas, then or later, were mentally disturbed by rapid Westernisation. They seem rather to have balanced this well with retained traditions, particularly their language and chieftancy. Rather than being disrupted by different colonial policies, Duala chieftancy seems to have remained an authentic native institution, respected by the people.

The French made some less fanciful judgements also, such as the one on the effects of uncertainty over the war. The report just quoted said, "...we are considered much more as acting managers rather than permanent masters"⁴⁸, and a missionary in 1916 said, "The Dualas.... have the idea that we, that is the French, will not stay"⁴⁹. The French authorities persistently asked the Spanish Governor-General to remove the German officers and their Cameroonian soldiers from Fernando Po, where their presence aggravated the feelings of uncertainty; the officers were moved to Spain and eventually about 3,000 of the African soldiers were allowed to return to their homes before the Armistice⁵⁰. Dualas were apparently in contact with Fernando Po during the war⁵¹; but they were probably simply "hedging bets", or seeking news from German or

49. M. Briault to Superior-General of Holy Ghost Fathers, 11 Nov. 1916, in Holy Ghost Fathers Archives, Paris, Cameroun 1914-27 correspondence.

50. Report....until 1 July 1921, p.419-20.

51. Commissioner to Minister of Colonies, 23 March 1920, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris. In future footnotes "Minister", unspecified, means the Minister of the Colonies.

neutral sources about the progress of the war.

The New Missions.

An important event for the majority of the Dualas was the revival of missionary activity, by both Protestant and Catholic Missions, in 1917. The new Protestant Mission, sent to take over the work of the Basle and Berlin Baptist Missions, was by far the more important. The Société des Missions Evangéliques, a missionary body representing several Protestant churches in France and Calvin's own Geneva church, sent missionaries to Douala in 1917 after an appeal by the three Duala Evangelical pastors, Modi Din, Kuo Issedou and Ekollo.. They had contacted the Basle Mission through Pastor Rhode, still living at Buea, and it was with the Basle Mission's approval that the SME sent its pioneer party to Douala in 1917⁵².

They were pioneers only for the SME, not for Christianity. Pastor Elie Allégret (1865-1940), who had worked for years with the SME mission in Gabon before heading the new Douala mission, and his colleagues knew that while there was virgin Mission country inland in French Cameroun, among the Dualas the situation was very different. Most of them probably adhered to Protestant Christianity, and although some conversions were inevitably

52. Africa Secretary, Basle Mission, Basle, to Pastors Modi Din, Kuo Issedou and Ekollo, 30 Dec. 1916, in René Douala Manga Bell papers, Douala.

superficial the social position of the new faith was undoubted. There were several Duala pastors and these had for three years run the affairs of the Protestant churches on their own, and, as the new Huguenot missionaries were aware, had acquired a maturity which had to be recognised.

The removal of the German missionaries had probably removed in 1914 the barriers between the Mission and Independent or "Native" Baptists. Anyway it was later said that the two had formed a united body in 1914, with the Native Baptists agreeing in principle to submit to a future Mission⁵³. This is credible enough, though the history of the Native Baptists is somewhat obscure as already noted, and the important events which were to be linked with it after 1917 are hard to unravel. YOSHUA Dibundu was still alive in 1917, and possibly the leader, if there was one, of the Native Baptists or of all the Duala Baptists. Other Baptist pastors were Tobbo Eyoum, Ngando Nsangué and Lotin Same.

The Evangelical Christians, more numerous than the Baptists, remained separate from them. After his return from captivity Modi Din not only ran the parish of New-Bell but also made missionary journeys to Njoya's Bamoun kingdom. Kuo Issedou and Ekollo ran their home parishes, Akwa and Bonaberi respectively⁵⁴.

53. R.L. Buell, The Native Problem in Africa, vol. 2, p. 302-3.

54. J. van Slageren, Les Origines de l'Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun, p. 126ff.; F. Grob, Témoins Camerounais de l'Evangile, chapter on Modi Din.

As in other Protestant churches laymen were also important, and this helped the churches in Douala to continue without missionaries. A Church Elders' Association was founded in 1916 by David Mandessi Bell, who kept the churches going with his money, and Hugo Etoa and Robert Ebolo Bile⁵⁵.

Allégret arrived on 19 Feb. 1917 with two colleagues, Pastors Bergeret and Oechsner de Coninck. They and Pastor Christol, who arrived soon afterwards, admired the way in which the Duala Christian leaders had held the fort. They were prepared to allow a considerable role to Africans in the Mission work which they had come to restart. However, the missionaries were men of their time and believed that their control was necessary for the good of the Evangelical and Baptist churches. The Report of the Annual Conference of the Cameroun Mission in 1919 said, "We desire as much as the Africans that they eventually take over all responsibility for their churches, so that we can with them carry our strength further ahead; but there is a stage to pass, an intermediate period of education for freedom, between total dependence and absolute independence. It is this stage, so delicate, so important from the point of view of the future, that the churches of Cameroun must cross now"⁵⁶.

This was written after two years of work to revive the Protestant Missions under the new missionaries'

55. Notes on pastors and Christians of Douala by Pastor Brutsch.

56. Journal des Missions Evangéliques, Paris, second half of 1919, p. 138.

direction, two years of frequent difficulties between them and the Duala Christians, particularly the Baptists. An unknown number of the Baptists had always been with the NBC, and others had been used to running their affairs for three years. All, but particularly the NBC adherents, could claim continuity with Saker's mission, particularly continuity in doctrinal matters such as the age of baptism. In contrast, the Evangelicals could seem to be Vicars of Bray submitting to three different foreign missions in succession. This must have helped give the "Native" Baptists a nationalistic appeal which ^{they} certainly had in the Mandate period. They were intensely attached to self-government in Church matters. All the Duala Baptists seem to have been concerned about this, and all the disagreements between them and the French Protestant Mission seem to have come down to the basic problem of control. Recognising this early on, Christol wrote, "Their great fear, I believe, is to see us setting foot in their entirely native organisation. That is not however our intention; our desire is to see created a sort of federation of Protestant churches of Cameroun, where we would reserve to ourselves the right of supervision which seems to be still necessary"⁵⁷.

The Missions had a conciliatory approach as shown here, and so at first did the Duala Baptists.

57. Letter of F. Christol, 8 July 1917, in Journal des Missions Evangéliques (hereafter referred to as JME), second half of 1917, p. 133.

Talks were held and on 16 Sept. 1917 Allégret preached before a Baptist congregation of 500.⁵⁸ But there were many causes of disagreement. The Missionaries felt moral discipline had become slack among the Dualas, and insisted particularly on renouncing of polygamy, which Duala Christians were very unwilling to accept. It was eventually agreed that polygamists who were already Church members could remain so, and the Mission was prepared to regularise on conditions the position of certain pastors whose consecration seemed doubtfully valid to them, such as Ngando Nsangué. But they insisted on a general tightening of discipline and, most fundamentally of all, on a considerable degree of European control over the Baptists. That was the basic ground for disagreement.

The Mission (itself representing many different churches) did not want to create a united Protestant body with uniform doctrine, and the Baptists were never required to give up doctrine such as adult baptism. The Mission aimed at a very loose structure which would amount to little more than joint Consistories of Evangelical and Baptist churches. The two groups of churches would be in practice distinct for all normal purposes. However, in the Mission's view each group must be under the control of the missionary Steering Committee⁵⁹. Joint Consistories of Evangelicals and Baptists hardly ever met in later years⁶⁰, so the

58. JME, second half of 1917, p.213.

59. Buell, loc.cit.

60. Interview, Pastor Jean Rusillon, Geneva, 29 July 1973.

Christians were in practice always separated into Evangelical and Baptist sections, with whole temples' congregations sometimes following one or another.

The Evangelicals accepted the missionaries' control over their group, but not without opposition on many points in which their Duala pastors took a lead. On the question of polygamy Modi Din pleaded for exemptions for hard cases, and he and the other two Duala Evangelical pastors submitted to the missionaries' views very reluctantly⁶¹. On most disciplinary matters the Duala pastors probably agreed with the missionaries, who in turn generally expressed admiration for them and also for other Duala auxiliaries of the Mission, the catechists and evangelists.

Many Baptists accepted the authority of the Mission from ^{an} early date. It is not clear how many did, or when. After the conference of Evangelical churches from 26 to 28 Sept. 1917,⁶² there was a conference of Baptists on 2 October, attended by NBC adherents. Allégret appealed for unity, but soon afterwards some Baptists, led by Dibundu, broke off talks with the Mission⁶³. From that date, it seems, there were two groups of Baptists, one accepting and the other rejecting the authority of the Mission. The ones rejecting it later formed a recognisable group called by the previous name of the Native Baptist Church

61. van Slageren, op.cit., p.144-5.

62. van Slageren, op.cit., p.142-4; JME, second half of 1917, p.296

63. van Slageren, op.cit., p.147

(the English name being retained for many years, probably to indicate continuity with the pre-1886 Baptists). In fact the NBC probably never ceased to exist at any point after about 1906.

Besides asserting their control, not wholly effectively, over the existing Christian community, the new Mission was soon working to spread the Gospel in areas largely untouched by it, which included many Sawa areas near Douala. There and further inland Duala pastors, evangelists and catechists gave vital help — Modi Din at Edea and Eseka, Kuo Issedou at Sakbayeme, Martin Itondo at Nkongsamba, Paul Jocky at Lobetal, all in the first three years of the new Mission⁶⁴. The missionaries lost no time in seeing that these African auxiliaries learned French; 80 Mission schoolteachers passed a French language test in 1917⁶⁵. The Mission also helped with French classes for other Dualas of the educated class. Bergeret and Oechsner de Coninck began a school for evangelists and teachers in 1919. From that year the Mission published a monthly news-sheet, Kalat'a mwendi, an early example of its extensive use of the Duala language.

The Catholic Mission was formally restarted when on 3 Feb. 1917 Fr. Jules Douvry, who had continued to keep some of the Pallotine mission's work going with other military chaplains, was appointed Apostolic Administrator for the Vicariate of Cameroun. His powers

64. *ibid.*, p. 152; JME, first half of 1919, p.336; notes by Pastor Brutsch.

65. JME, second half of 1917, p. 215.

were limited to French Cameroun, where he had then a dozen priests helping him. It was his order, the Holy Ghost Fathers, which was to do most of the Catholic missionary work in French Cameroun from then on; it came directly under the French province of the order. Although the Germans' partition into zones for different Missions had not been enforced strictly and was abolished by the French in 1917, the main success of the Holy Ghost Fathers mission was to be among the Betis and other interior peoples; among the Dualas they could not make much impact. But Douala was their base at first⁶⁶. In central and northern Cameroun the French Sacred Heart Fathers replaced the German fathers of the same order. Their territory extended southwards as far as to include Bonaberi.

Both Protestant and Catholic missions suffered at first not only from shortage of clergy but from their inability to take possession of the buildings of the German missions, though they were allowed to use some of them.

The Dualas and the Peace.

The end of the war, on which so much depended in French Cameroun, eventually came. On July 4 1918 the administration organised celebrations of American Independence Day and issued a notice in Duala explaining why; it mentioned the entry of the USA into the war, no

66. Bulletin de la Congrégation du Saint-Esprit, 1918-20 volume, p. 645-6; 1914-27 volume, p. 352, 462-3.

doubt to encourage the Dualas to believe in an Allied victory. This was to come within a few months, but before then the world influenza epidemic reached Douala, arriving by the British ship St. Philip's Land which docked on 6 Oct. 1918. It spread fast. Soon large numbers of Dualas were leaving the town for villages and plantations to escape the flu, but many Africans caught it: soldiers and military recruits, prisoners, schoolchildren, and most labourers employed by the government. Many Africans died, and twelve Europeans⁶⁷. The Protestant Mission said many Africans turned to Christianity when the flu struck⁶⁸.

Fourneau went on a tour in the latter part of 1918 but was back in Douala before the Armistice of 11 Nov. 1918. There was an official reception in Douala the following day, a public holiday on the 13th, and more festivities on the 17th including canoe races and a reception given by Fourneau for Duala chiefs and elders. According to the *Journal Officiel* of 1 December the chiefs and elders expressed joy at the victory and hopes for a reduction in the cost of living and better produce prices, as well as hopes for "continuation of the benevolent regime and great liberty" of French rule.

Even this public declaration contained a hint of criticism, and the real attitude of the Duala leaders was soon seen to be very different from the pro-French utterances at the official celebrations.

67. Martin, op.cit., p. 126, 141.

68. JME, 1st half of 1919, p. 181.

Soon after the Armistice a meeting of chiefs was held and agreed on a joint message, written in Duala. It said the Dualas were pleased at the victory but wanted to be heard by representatives of the Allies on the question of their future. According to one version it said, "The Duala country refuses to choose a nation which will be the country's protector before seeing representatives of the Allies who have defeated the Germans"⁶⁹. Two different dates, 19 Nov.⁶⁹ and 1 Dec. 1918⁷⁰, are given for this important message (unless there were two). The facts are partly obscure but it is clear enough what the chiefs were saying.

The French already knew about the desire for self-determination, so that they may not have been altogether surprised by the message. The Chef de Circonscription, M. Matthieu, said he called the Bell, Akwa and Deido Paramount Chiefs (he may have considered Bonaberi to be included under Bell) to discuss a show of loyalty following the Armistice, and they called the junior chiefs and elders to a meeting on 1 Dec. which agreed on the message. Then he told the chiefs to explain their wishes and expressed surprise that the message made no specific mention ^{of} France. The chiefs said several things which suggested they felt unable to mention France⁷⁰. They may have wanted to congratulate

69. Gouellain, Douala, p. 172, quoting letter of Chef de Circonscription to Commissioner, 31 May 1919.

70. Fourneau to Governor-General of AEF, 22 Jan. 1919, Box Cameroun AP II 28, Archives SOM, Paris.

all the Allies, but possibly they were revealing a hope for transfer to British rule, which may well have seemed a possibility.

Fourneau reproduced Matthieu's report in a long and frank letter on 22 January 1919 to the Governor-General of AEF on the Dualas' lack of devotion to France⁷⁰. He mentioned the demands for consultation on the future, and added that some Dualas thought a new treaty was necessary — a natural development of the ideas about the earlier treaty — and could be made with France. He then mentioned those who called for independence: "They say: 'The Allies fought the war against oppression and declared that they would free oppressed peoples. Well, we were held under a heavy yoke. So the Allies must declare us free.' "⁷⁰

Before sending this letter Fourneau had received another message, this time from the four paramount chiefs. His cabled résumé of it read, "All chiefs and natives city Douala undersigned unison with Allies cry joy victory over your enemies. We thank you unceasingly for the victory which has freed us. We all await the Allied representatives and will receive them with pleasure." The Commissioner told the Governor-General of this message by cable on 17 Dec. 1918, and then sent a new cable with his comments, similar to those he was to make a month later but adding, in the cable, "Duala population very pretentious consists about ten thousand inhabitants without any authority or influence

outside its group",⁷¹ This was much overstated, no doubt to counter the effect of any news of Duala reactions which might reach President Wilson. However dismissive of them, the French were upset by Duala views. The paramount chiefs' air of authority, in deigning to receive the Allied representatives whom they assumed would come, must have riled the French particularly. Fourneau felt it necessary to spell out the disadvantages, as he saw them, of an anarchic state such as he thought Liberia to be⁷¹.

Behind these two or three messages there must have been plenty of activity and organisation, amid strong feelings. The centre of it seems to have been Paramount Chief Diboussi Akwa, whose attitude must have shocked his French sponsors. Fourneau said Diboussi had been opposed by his father and his brother Din Akwa and was now (he said) opposed for his political ideas by the chiefs of Bonamuti, Bonakwamwang and Bonabekombo in Akwa⁷⁰. Soon afterwards, certainly before Fourneau's letter of 22 January 1919, Diboussi Akwa was dismissed, after he had allegedly provoked incidents and threatened pro-French chiefs and elders⁷⁰. This report strongly suggests a state of serious opposition among the Dualas. Din Akwa, who had been freed from prison before the Armistice, was considered pro-French, and he was later to be installed in place of Diboussi, though not immediately⁷⁰.

71. Governor-General of AEF to Minister of Colonies, Dakar 27 Dec. 1918, Box Cameroun AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris.

The Mandate and the Dualas.

The Paramount Chief of Deido, Ekwalla Epee, seems to have been arrested about the time of Diboussi Akwa's dismissal, and as his brother was noted as a nationalist this action may have had a political reason also. But the French reaction against the protesters was limited at this time as it did not include Lobe Bell. Also, Ekwalla Epee was possibly not dismissed during his brief imprisonment. Soon after being freed he died, on 3 July 1919, after a reign of 16 years. His son Eboa Epee succeeded him, but apparently as a temporary ruler pending the majority of Eyoun Ekwalla, son of another son of the dead Paramount Chief⁷².

By that time the political future of the chiefs and everyone else in Douala had been decided at the Paris Peace Conference. On 28 June 1919 the Treaty of Versailles was signed, including clauses granting the former German colonies to the Allies not as mere colonies, but as Mandated Territories under the newly-created League of Nations. It was on 7 May 1919 that the Conference agreed on British and French Mandates over the former Kamerun. Neu-Kamerun was handed back to AEF, and the pre-1911 area of Kamerun was divided almost exactly along the lines of the provisional partition of 1916, with two relatively small areas adjoining Nigeria going to Britain and the rest to France — including Douala.

72. Interview, Johannes Sam Deido.

Dualas had maintained their attitude shown at the time of the Armistice and refused to sit idly by letting Europeans decide their future. In March 1919 a meeting chose men from Bell, Akwa and Deido to go to Buea with a message for the British Resident, asking for Douala to come under British rule⁷³. This indicated the Dualas' traditional Anglophilia, which must have been encouraged by the fact that the border of British Cameroons was so near. Later the Dualas said that they had sent a message to the Allies via the British government; this may have referred to the same message, on which little is otherwise known⁷⁴. The Douala Chef de Circonscription's report for 1919⁷⁵ said the Dualas had stopped paying taxes for a month after sending the petition.

Before the decision on the Mandates a new Commissioner had been appointed to replace Fourneau, who left on 25 April 1919. Jules Carde, aged 44, had been Secretary-General of AEF before proceeding to Cameroun.

There may not have been any Dualas expressing their people's claims in Paris at this time, when so many representatives of subject and minority peoples were there full of hope from the Fourteen Points and the League of Nations. But there were many Camerounians in Germany, probably Dualas for the greater part, and they had a recognised spokesman, Martin Dibobe of Bell,

73. Chef de Circonscription to Commissioner, 31 May 1919, quoted in Gouellain, loc.cit.

74. Petition of Dualas, 18 August 1919, file Cameroun AP 615, Archives SOM, Paris.

75. quoted in Gouellain, op.cit., p.173.

an employee of the Berlin U-Bahn, who in 1919 expressed his people's nationalistic feelings in an unusual way. He wanted his country to come under German rule again, but with a totally reformed administration which amounted to virtual African self-government. In June 1919 he sent a note, which he said represented the views of many Cameroonians in Germany, to the National Assembly at Weimar, setting out his ideas. He called for compulsory education, access for Africans to all posts except that of Governor, permanent representation in the Reichstag, elected Presidents of the Duala, Beti and Bamoun tribes, and a six-month probation period for each Governor, followed by his recall if the Africans were not satisfied with him⁷⁶. It was a remarkable document for the Africa of 1919 generally, though not too different from what Dualas were saying at home.

The French wanted outright annexation of their share of the German empire, but agreed in the end to the Mandates. Their original wish may well have been due to fears that educated Africans would notice the differences between the idea of a Mandate and ordinary colonial rule, as the Dualas did. Legal theorists argued for years after 1919 about the Mandates, with at least some contending that the native population had a share of sovereign power which was delegated to the Mandatory. But the League of

76. Minister to Commissioner, 5 Nov. 1920, in file Affaires Politiques at Administratives 10038, Cameroon Archives, Yaounde. In future references to those archives "Affaires Politiques et Administratives" is abbreviated "APA".

Nations was to make French Cameroun* and British Cameroons "B" Mandates, which were to have ordinary colonial administration with certain special provisions, but without the specific promise of eventual self-government made for the (ex-Turkish) "A" Mandate territories.

The Mandated Territory of French Cameroun included most of the former German colony; much of the Fulani-ruled north of Kamerun, all the Bamoun kingdom, all the territory of the Bassas and Betis, the full length of the railways, and Douala. To mark the signing of the treaty confirming French rule over all this, guns, bells and sirens sounded in Douala at 3 p.m. on the 28 June 1919, and a proclamation was issued; at night there was a torchlight procession through Akwa and Bell, and the band stopped by Government House to play the Marseillaise, God Save the King and the Brabançonne. Carde gave a speech. But the missionary Christol, recording the celebrations, said the Dualas were still in an uncertain mood, and added, "It must be said, also, that the population here is very proud and thinks of only one thing: to govern itself"⁷⁷.

The Petition of 18 August 1919.

In this spirit a group of nationalists including two paramount chiefs drew up a long petition

* At the time British documents and writers spoke of "French Cameroons".

77. JME, second half of 1919, p. 147.

in German, which on 18 August 1919 they sent to the French government for forwarding to the Peace Conference. This was the longest and most remarkable expression thus far of the mature nationalist sentiment among the Dualas, and the first of several petitions from them in the Mandate period.

Written in a mild and respectful tone, the petition began, "The news which is now rebounding over the whole world, which has been ardently awaited by humanity, the news of the end of the war, has reached us also." The petitioners said they had wanted to send a full picture of the situation in Cameroun to the Conference, but as this would take too long had decided to send a petition, following an earlier approach to the Allies via the British government. They noted the decision on Mandates as implying some difference from colonial rule and mentioned "the world League which would be formed now and whose first task would be to back the interests of the natives and to deliver them from every arbitrary principle"⁷⁸.

Then came the essential point of the petition: "The natives of Cameroun and their chiefs" asked the Allies "to study in the course of an appropriate examination whether Cameroun cannot be considered a neutral territory". If this was not in accordance with the Allies' wishes, the petitioners added, they would agree to be ruled by an Allied power; "However, we ask

78. Petition of 18 August 1919, French translation, in file Cameroun AP II 615, Archives SOM, Paris.

the High Conference to give us the right to choose the power". Thus the petitioners rejected the decision of the Peace Conference and reopened the whole question, apparently thinking either that the Conference was still sitting or that it was itself to be transformed into the League of Nations. Inevitably the French paid no attention to such a demand, but they were concerned at the continued independence shown in the main demand and in specific ones which followed: a guarantee of civil rights, especially personal freedom, and of the right to trade freely and establish both economic and political enterprises; security of office for chiefs, whose "selection and dismissal should be reserved to the people and not to the government"; the right to form communal unions; an end to summary jurisdiction; compensation to Africans for war damage; and several concessions on property matters — an end to expropriations like that of the Bonadoo land, recognition of security of tenure, the restoration of land confiscated for railway building, and even the restoration of land sold for that purpose. Finally the petition called for revision of the trial of Rudolf Bell and Ngosso Din, and of the punishment of Dika Mpondo in 1911.

Some of the demands are difficult to understand, such as the one about "communal unions". But generally they are the demands one would expect of anti-colonial petitioners, and they were put forward as conditions for acceptance of a new colonial regime. Once again Dualas were speaking as independent people graciously

agreeing to accept colonial rule. This attitude was to remain strong. In 1919 feelings against Europeans were quite intense. The 1919-20 Inspection Mission report said the opposition to French rule came from a small group of educated people aged between 25 and 35, but that these "are in solidarity with their chiefs and have the support of a noticeable portion of the less educated population"⁷⁹. Christol said Dualas often spoke rudely, in Duala which white men other than missionaries usually did not understand, about Europeans, and showed many signs of anti-white feeling; the missionary commented, "We are, it is true, the people who defeated the Germans, but nonetheless of their race, of that race which deceived them"⁸⁰.

The petition was signed by Henry Lobe Bell and Eboa Epee, the chiefs Ntepe Priso of Bonapriso and Mudute Bile of Bonadouma, other chefs de quartier, and elders including Bebe Ndumbe (probably the businessman Bebe Bell) and the prominent Bell elder Ekale Dale. Carde, for some reason, gave a somewhat different list of instigators of the petition, apparently assigning a secondary role to the "Kings" of Bell and Deido. He named, in his own spelling, "Ibongue be-Ekwebell, Mondi Bosse, Siliki Same, Mudute Bell, Ngen Mandine, Ndin Ndine" as the leaders, and said Lobe Bell and Eboa Epee could be added, together with Lobe Manga Priso,

79. Report of Inspector Humblot, in file on Douala land expropriation, Box Cameroun AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris; Gouellain, op.cit., p.193.

80. JME, second half of 1919, p.147.

Toto Ngosso, Doo Bell, Munyanga, Manbu Bell (sic), Mukuri Bell, "Ikambi Njo", "Tokoto Isome", "Nikano Mukuri" and "Nundumbu Ejange"⁸¹.

Most of these names are recognisable as those of known anti-colonial figures. Siliki Same was a particularly active protest leader for decades. Lobe Manga Priso, Ekamb'a Njo, Mudute Bell and Tokoto Essome were all former colleagues of Duala Manga; "Doo Bell" was probably Doo Dayas. Bell people seem to have been prominent in the agitation, but it is clear that clan rivalries did not matter much.

The Return to Normal.

The widespread Duala reaction against French Mandatory rule was noted by the Inspection Mission of 1919-20 already mentioned, which studied Duala grievances with considerable open-mindedness. The French, however, regarded the leaders of the opposition with predictable hostility, and took care to investigate them and their alleged foreign contacts. As early as 1919 they were convinced that such contacts were decisive in Duala dissidence; suspects then were Pastor Bender, at Buea until late 1919, and (through a brother) Martin Dibobe in Germany⁸².

To any colonial power at that time such opposition was a minor irritant in the course of generally

81. Carde to Minister, 23 March 1920, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

82. *ibid.*, and Minister to Carde, 5 Nov. 1920, file APA 10222, Cameroon Archives.

unchallenged assertion of authority and organisation of colonial administration. After Versailles the French went ahead to place their administration on a firm footing. One early measure involved in this process was the moving of the capital from Douala to Yaounde, probably decided upon mainly for climatic reasons, Yaounde having been a German hill station. It was not to take place until 1921, but in 1919-20 the Central Railway was extended by a narrow-gauge line from Njock to Makak,⁸³ probably with the move of the capital in mind. French Cameroun was only slowly separated administratively from AEF, and after Versailles three years passed before the terms of the Mandate were formalised.

Some regulations on impositions affecting the Africans were to be made after then, in accordance with the Mandate. But on taxation, which was not to be affected in any case by the Mandate terms, there was an important change of policy in an Arrêté of 13 Sept. 1919: African women were made liable to pay the head-tax⁸⁴. This was to be much resented, but at first its impact was slight because mothers of young children, and hence many women, were exempted. The aim of the exemption was later said to be to encourage the birth rate, for it was believed in Cameroun, as in AEF, that the population was declining, and in Douala among other places artificial birth prevention was thought to be a cause. The head-tax remained the basic African tax; in the 1919-20 financial

83. Chauleur (ed.), op.cit., p.121.

84. Report....until 1 July 1921, p.428.

year it raised 402,832 francs in Douala Circonscription.

The French created for Cameroun, by decree of 14 April 1920, a Conseil d'Administration, corresponding to a British colony's Executive Council. It was at first all official except for two French citizens⁸⁵, but later there were to be African unofficial members.

The administration created on 17 Sept. 1919 a Garde Régionale, which in due course completed the replacement of the wartime Tirailleurs Sénégalais and Tirailleurs Congolais by Camerounian soldiers. Douala Circonscription had 150 soldiers of the new formation⁸⁶. The first Garde Régionale recruits included many ex-soldiers returning from Fernando Po. From August to November 1919 the former soldiers of the Germans were repatriated from there, with many civilians; 13,000 people in all⁸⁷. Probably very few were Dualas, but Carde noted that soldiers originating from British colonies and Liberia among the returnees stayed in Douala⁸⁸.

Other West African immigrants were coming to Douala at this time also, with Camerounians from the interior, because of the post-war economic boom. Dualas were also busy taking advantage of this by 1920, when the Chef de Circonscription said the surest way to win over the Dualas was to "favour their material prosperity"⁸⁹.

85. JOC 1 July 1920.

86. Report....until 1 July 1921, p. 422.

87. *ibid.*, p. 419-20.

88. Carde to Minister, 23 March 1920, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

89. Douala Circonscription Annual Report for 1920, p.6, file APA 11873, Cameroon Archives.

Dualas needed little help to increase their own prosperity, especially through increased cultivation of cash crops. But while that activity was very important Dualas remained oriented towards office jobs; a Protestant missionary, M. Baier, said all or 95 per cent of all Dualas wanted to be clerks, and "the country is cluttered with these boys who are not capable of anything but wielding a pen"⁹⁰. The opportunities for such people, however, were much expanded after the return of peace. The government then organised its African civil service, with a series of Arrêtés dealing with Clerk-Interpreters (23 August 1919), interpreters (24 August 1919), post office staff (25 June 1919), and AMI nurses (6 Nov. 1919). Maximum pay for such officials was 4,000 francs p.a., earned by, for example, a Chief Clerk-Interpreter 1st Class. Besides these there were the many new employees taken on by the firms in the economic revival.

The expansion of education, needed to train such subordinate staff, was delayed like other post-war administrative measures by the departure of European officials who had been released from military service for work in Cameroun, and who left on demobilisation. But the government was able to open some schools even at this time, and to conduct examinations for pupils of government and mission primary schools.

90. JME, second half of 1920, p. 195.

The Town and the Circonscription.

After the permanent establishment of French rule the main unit of local administration remained the Circonscription, but the number of those units was increased eventually to 15. Douala Circonscription, enlarged on 30 Dec. 1919, extended far beyond the town, and so even did Douala Subdivision, one of the three Subdivisions; it was estimated in 1920 to have 72,000 out of the 180,000 people in the Circonscription⁹¹.

Not only was most of the Circonscription rural; Douala was still a semi-rural town, and the Duala people were still tied to agriculture. A survey in the late 1930s was to show that this people who had for so long engaged in so many non-agricultural pursuits, from fisherman to clerk, still typically owned farms⁹². Besides the major cocoa and palm plantations there were farms for food growing, oil palms being of course in that category also. Many were in or near the town.

The area which, with that qualification, can be called urban had about a third of the population of Douala Subdivision. In 1920 the town was estimated to have a population of 22,000 Dualas, 1,000 immigrants from the interior, and 900 non-Cameroun Africans⁹³. There were 454 Europeans in the Subdivision, probably almost all in the town.

91. Douala Circonscription Annual Report 1920, p.3, file APA 11873, Cameroon Archives.

92. See Appendix .

93. Douala Annual Report 1920, p.4, file APA 11873, Cameroon Archives.

Most or all of the area covered by the Circonscription was under Duala influence. Duala was spoken or understood by other Sawa tribes, by peoples along the Northern Railway, and by Bandem and Bassa people in Yabassi Subdivision, whose main town, Yabassi, was an important commercial centre closely linked with Douala by canoe and motor-boat. And Dualas had their plantations – of which more later – scattered over much of the Circonscription.

The traditional hegemony of Bell and Akwa over non-Dualas had continued, and the 1919-20 Inspection Mission found it was still important, mainly because of the "Mixed Courts" whose wide jurisdiction had been recognised by the Germans. Thus the Paramount Chief of Bell, through his courts, had a considerable hold over the Pongo, Abo, Mongo and Balong peoples; the Akwa Paramount Chief over many Bassas of the Dibamba river valley and in Nyombe Subdivision; and Deido over certain areas where Deido people had plantations⁹⁴. Bell and Akwa Dualas, also, extended their influence through the plantations as well as the courts. In 1920 people from as far away as the Banen country were taking their important "palavers" to Douala⁹⁵.

There was no separate administrative set-up for the most important town in the territory. It was simply a part of a Circonscription headed by a Chef de

94. Report of Inspector Humblot in file on Douala expropriation, Box Cameroun AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris.

95. Douala Annual Report 1920, file APA 11873, Cameroun Archives; p.6ff.

Circonscription. The holder of that post in Douala, however, was always to be a particularly important official. Jean-Victor Chazelas was appointed on 24 June 1919 for the first of two tours of duty in the post.

Physical development of the town was initially slow after the return of peace. The government in the first two years opened an abattoir and an important new vaccine institute (to serve all Cameroun), and in 1920 a leprosarium and asylum for incurables in New-Bell. The firms Hatton & Cookson and Maurel (a major French West Coast firm), and the Lebanese Nassif, began new office buildings. In 1920, as a sign of economic recovery, 39 buildings permits were issued, 14 to Africans⁹⁶.

On 12 Sept. 1919 an Arrêté on the Douala urban area laid down sweeping measures to make the town as European as possible. In a way it was a revival of the German plan, but it did not include expropriation of Africans. It ordered that no non-durable houses should be kept or built on the Joss plateau and in parts of Akwa – which meant, in effect, that most Africans would be forbidden to have houses in those areas, which it was intended to develop further as Europeanised areas, mainly for the government in Bonanjo (Joss) and the firms in Akwa. For the whole urban area house building needed a permit from the Chef de Circonscription, and payment of a fee (e.g. 10 francs for a building worth 1,000 francs). Most drastic of all, cultivation was totally banned in

96. *ibid.*, p. 14.

the urban area, except for market-gardening and flower and hedge growing⁹⁷.

The Arrêté was potentially a severe blow for the Africans of Douala, and the Inspection Mission found it was much resented. Its aim was to preserve or enhance the Europeanised appearance of a large part of the town, and the health of the Europeans living there. As in later years, and as before 1914, this was a major concern underlying official declarations about sanitary problems. The measures accordingly enacted were directed against the people most able, of all Africans, to live by European standards. They were, however, not enforced at all thoroughly at the time under review.

An extensive report on the first five years of French rule said the administration in Douala "has not adopted the system, which aroused such lively protests against the previous authorities, of segregation by collective expropriation. In the reserved perimeter, Europeans and natives are admitted on the same terms, on the sole condition of submitting to planning and public health obligations. Those who find them too burdensome have the opportunity to settle in the built-up area situated outside the perimeter, but near enough to cause no hardship to daily activities of social life. It is, in short, individual segregation by free consent"⁹⁸. The "free consent" was a joke for the majority of Africans who could not build European-style houses in

97. JOC 1 Oct. 1919.

98. Reportuntil 1 July 1921, p. 444.

the "reserved perimeter", and an unknown number had to move out; but in Akwa, at least, many seem to have stayed.

Dr. Gustave Martin thought the 12 Sept. 1919 Arrêté did not go far enough, and even suggested simple resumption of the German plan. This idea was rejected in the report just quoted, and in Chazelas' Annual Report for the Circonscription for 1920. The strong protests by the Bonadoo at the expropriation in 1914, and the efforts made since to have that land restored, may well have been a factor in the decision to expropriate no more Duala land.

Curbing the Dualas.

The Colonial Inspection Service, which was a separate section of the French colonial service, was asked in the latter part of 1919 to carry out an investigation into the Bonadoo claim for restoration of the expropriated land. Assistant Inspector Humblot produced a report for a special Inspection Mission to Cameroun and Togo headed by Colonial Inspector-General Meray, who on 22 April 1920 submitted it to the Minister⁹⁹. Far from dealing only with the land case, it was a thorough examination of the Dualas' position vis-à-vis the government. This had no doubt been intended, and the report reflects French concern over the Dualas' attitude.

Humblot made a sympathetic study of the Dualas,

99. Meray to Minister, 22 April 1920, and enclosed Report; expropriation file, Box Cameroun AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris.

noting their widespread conversion to Christianity and Westernisation, and considering them as more developed than the other Sawa (except the Wuris, who rivalled them in farming and trade but were less numerous) and the Bassas. Surveying the recent history of Dualas' opposition to colonial rule under successive chiefs, up to and including the petition of 18 August 1919, he considered — as noted earlier — that such opposition now had wide support, and called on the administration to respond by giving the Dualas an important role in local government. More specifically, the report called for a return to German and British chieftancy policies, instead of the existing French policy which "systematically thrusts down anything like leadership"¹⁰⁰. But far from acting on the report's recommendations the Cameroun administration criticised findings which went against its already fixed prejudices about the Dualas and their chiefs¹⁰¹.

Humblot said the "King" of Bell had earned 30-40,000 francs per year at least under the Germans, but now earned only 289, the rebate on the head-tax of his subjects. Humblot may have been overstating his case here, for it is not clear what the chiefs earned in the early years of French rule. An official report dealing with the Mixed Courts, noting the large income earned from court costs by paramount chiefs in the German period (2,000 marks per month for Duala Manga, 1,200 for the Paramount Chief of Deido) and the brief British

100. Report by Inspector Humblot (see note 99); Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p. 189ff.

101. Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p. 193.

period (when Lobe Bell made 10,000 marks per month), suggested that they were still profiting greatly through those courts, from fees and fines¹⁰². Lobe Bell may have been earning less than before, though calculations are difficult because Humblot seems not to have converted marks to francs at the 1917 official rate. Using that rate, Lobe Bell earned under the British the equivalent of 90,000 francs, or £3,500, per year. The French possibly cut down his income, but the chiefs may not have been so poor as alleged in 1920. They were, however, to be put on fixed salaries later, not, indeed, in the spirit of Humblot's "Indirect Rule"; one advocate of such salaries, Chazelas, was also responsible for the first measures to reduce the Duala rulers' influence over other tribes.

These measures, in 1920, were the creation of new un-traditional chieftancies among the Bassas near Douala, and the Strangers in the town itself. There is little documentation on this important move, but enough to show its aim.

In 1920 Moïse Njo Lembe, Chief of the Bassa village of Ndokobong, was appointed Paramount Chief of the Bassas of Ndokoti, Ndokobong, Ndogsimbi and other villages in the Douala area¹⁰³. Henceforth these villages were officially no longer subject to the

102. Douala Annual Report 1920, file APA 11873, Cameroon Archives, p. 5-6.

103. Interview, André Njo, Pierre Penda and Bruno Ditourou Eyoum, Douala-Bassa; La Gazette du Cameroun, Yaounde, no. 118, 15 Oct. 1935.

Duala Paramount Chiefs, with whom they had been linked for generations. Relations had been so close – for example, the children of Bedouke Diwoto, chief of the Bassa village of Bonadiwoto near New-Bell, had been sent to school at the Bell ruler's expense¹⁰⁴ – that the creation of the new Paramount Chieftancy cannot have ended them overnight. But to end them ultimately was the clear French aim; the number of people involved was too small for there to be any other reason for the creation of a new (before long salaried) chief. Although the rural Bassas near Douala were so few they were further split up then or later, with the Bakokos, wrongly but persistently regarded by the French as distinct from the Bassas, being given their own Paramount Chief, Ndokat Nongue, before 1926.

The political motive was avowed in the case of the new chieftancies created in 1920 for the African Strangers in Douala, estimated then to number about 2,000. In his report for 1920 Chazelas wrote, "I have set about removing the numerous Strangers who inhabit Douala from Duala influence"¹⁰⁵. Most of them at this time were Bassas and Betis from other parts of Cameroun, and Nigerians (Hausas and "Lagosians"). Besides them, even smaller groups were given their own artificial chiefs. However, for a long time Strangers continued to live among the Dualas, under their effective influence.

Thus the French had the definite aim of reducing the Dualas' dominant influence in the coastal area.

104. Unpublished MS on Bassa history by Bruno Ditourou Eyoum, shown to author at Douala-Bassa, 1972.

105. Douala Annual Report 1920, file APA 11873, Cameroon Archives.

According to Humblot they were reducing the power of the chiefs over the Dualas also, but the official view was that the chiefs were without authority anyway. Chazelas said they acted as informers, as controllers of the people, and as transmitters of orders and summonses, but had "no authority without the French administration's help"¹⁰⁵. This statement implicitly reveals the true situation. Chiefs seemed to the French to have no authority because they could not carry out the role of mere policemen outlined by Chazelas; their people, while respecting them, made them act as spokesmen of their interests, not – apart from the unavoidable tax-collecting task – as policemen of the colonial government.

Then and later the hostile thoughts of the French about the Dualas were not a good guide to their actual policies, which although resented were more conciliatory than ideas in confidential correspondence suggested. However, even for the Humblot report there were limits to conciliation. On the Bonadoo land claim it considered that there should be more compensation; the Germans might be asked to pay this, but they would probably say the French had inherited the debt; then, however, proceeds from the auctions of confiscated German property might be used to pay compensation¹⁰⁶. But this was not at all a concession to the Bonadoo, who argued then, and for years afterwards, that the 1914 expropriation had been null and void under German law,

106. Report of Inspection Mission (see note 99).

so that the land had never become German government property and could not legally pass to the French government like other German government property (under Article 120 of the Treaty of Versailles), but must be restored as of right to them. The French view, expressed at the time of the Inspection report¹⁰⁷ and not challenged by the report, was that the German action had been legal, so that the French had legally inherited the land.

The Return of the Prince.

It was partly because of the question of his father's lands, connected with the whole land question, that Prince Alexandre Douala Manga Bell (Ndoumb'a Douala) was allowed to return from Europe. This was a major event in the lives of the Dualas and in the prince's own extraordinary life.

At the end of the war he was doing medical studies in Hamburg and had married a white Cuban wife, Andrea Jiménez Barroa. Soon after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles he was in Paris with his wife and their son and daughter. By the Treaty he, like other Africans of French Cameroun, had become a French subject or, more technically, an administré sous mandat français. The Camerounians in Germany were then able to go home, and over the next few years most did. Prince Alexandre's was an early and special case, considered at the highest level in the Colonial Ministry¹⁰⁸.

107. Gouellain, op.cit., p. 224.

108. See extensive correspondence in file 10, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

He was shadowed by the Sûreté while correspondence was exchanged on his return to Douala.¹⁰⁹

Eventually, his passage was paid for, and he sailed in October or November 1919 with a distant cousin, Reinhold Jombi Elong nya Ngando of Deido, who had also come from Germany. Dualas awaited his return keenly, their French rulers with apprehension, for several reasons. The Dualas were in a fractious mood and Prince Alexandre could be a natural leader for them, because of his education but most of all because of his parentage; the Governor-General of AEF, who opposed his return, said he might be drawn into "an attitude which would oblige us one day to take rigorous measures against him"¹¹⁰. In addition his education had been all-German, and the French were already worried, as they were to remain for twenty years, at the possible influence of the Germans over the Africans educated by them. Alexandre, however, reminded the French that he had special reasons for disliking the Germans ("the murderers of my father"¹¹¹), and the authorities must have decided that they had nothing to fear from him. Indeed, they had nothing to fear.

At the time Alexandre was a tall, slim man of 21, who then and later bore himself like a Prussian

109. For a detailed study of this part of Prince Alexandre's career see R. Joseph, "The Royal Pretender : Prince Douala Manga Bell in Paris, 1919-22", in Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines vol. XIV no. 54, 1974.

110. Governor-General to Minister, Brazzaville 4 Nov. 1919, file 10, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

111. Letter from Alexandre Douala Manga Bell, Neuilly 18 Sept. 1919, same box.

officer (which was what he had been trained to be). He had completely forgotten the Duala language and had to borrow Meinhof's German-Duala grammar from a French official, Léon Réallon, who had himself produced a French-Duala grammar, and re-learn his native tongue¹¹².

To prepare for the prince's return an Alexanderbund was created in Douala, with a women's section¹¹³, and Albert Bebe Bell composed a special anthem, the Alexandermarsch, in Duala¹¹⁴. The Alexanderbund was mentioned, as having several hundred members, in a letter to Martin Dibobe from his brother, which was seen by the police and added to their fears of German influence¹¹⁵. But the league organised to celebrate the return of the son of Rudolf Duala Manga Bell, who was bound to be in everyone's minds on the occasion, was obviously not pro-German.

The triumphal welcome for Prince Alexandre was one of the most spectacular events of Douala's recent history. Older men later recalled that day well, giving the impression of long and lavish festivities and celebrations. After leaving the boat the prince went to New-Bell, the place of exile of his people, and there the triumphal procession was held, with him driving down the main street in an open car to the acclamations of the people. The Alexanderbund organised continuous celebrations, including a party at New-Bell on 14 Dec., to which Carde was invited¹¹³.

112. Note by Réallon, 14 Oct. 1919, same box.

113. Alexanderbund invitations, 2 Nov. and 13 Dec. 1919, file APA 10726/B, Cameroon Archives.

114. Interview, Albert Bebe Bell.

115. Translation of letter^{to} Martin Dibobe from his brother, Oct. 1919, file APA 10038, Cameroon Archives.

After the celebrations the prince settled down at his mother's house and then at the Kronhaus at New-Bell¹¹⁶. In the eyes of his people he was already the true Paramount Chief. But the French, following a decision of the Governor-General¹¹⁰, refused to recognise him as such. They remained wary of him even though he seemed utterly loyal to them and had already shown, in France, the habits of a high liver and big spender which he was to have from then on. Soon Carde was suspecting him of being under the influence of his mother and her brother Doo Dayas¹¹⁷. In a general report on the situation in 1920 Carde said the Bonadoo had high hopes that the returned prince could obtain something for them¹¹⁸.

Indeed, no-one could have been better placed to lead a campaign for the return of the expropriated land. But people who hoped for any such lead from Ndomb'a Douala were to be disappointed. On 12 Feb. 1920 he formally asked the Chef de Circonscription for compensation for his own land covered by the 1914 expropriation¹¹⁹. As the Bonadoo generally were to refuse compensation and insist on full restoration of the land for years, this action was positively opposed to their cause. The prince's attitude shown then was never to change; he took no part in the political protests of the next few years.

116. Interviews, Albert Bebe Bell and Rodolphe Doumbe-Mouloby.

117. Carde to Minister, 23 March 1920, file 10, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

118. "Exposé général de la situation, 1920", in file APA 11937/A, Cameroon Archives.

119. Report by Inspector-General Meray (see note 99), p.4-5.

It must have been a crushing blow for the Bells and other Dualas, who had expected so much from him.

About the same time as his land compensation claim, certainly within four months of his return, Alexandre seems to have played a wholly pro-French role in events which included the removal of his uncle as Paramount Chief and may have involved a more general official move against the leading dissidents. According to Albert Bebe Bell, who was secretary to his cousin Lobe Bell, the latter was accused of negligence after one of his subordinates had embezzled tax money, and Ndoumb'a Douala told the French he would administer a correction to his uncle, who was sent to a plantation and then resigned¹¹⁴. That brother and successor of Rudolf Bell then lived on his plantations until his death a few years later.

Carde said Lobe Bell was a nationalist and the French may have been awaiting a pretext to remove him. But in March 1920 the Commissioner said Toto Ngosso had been sentenced as "an accomplice of Lobe Bell"¹¹⁷, which is strange as Lobe Bell himself is not said to have been arrested; possibly Toto Ngosso was sentenced for inciting his ruler. Carde also said Mandessi Bell had narrowly escaped arrest several times. The French may well have decided to take action against some of the dissident Duala leaders, perhaps encouraged by the evidence that their potential new leader was in fact utterly loyal to France. If Ndoumb'a Douala even asked to be allowed to take the traditional throne, he

probably submitted quite meekly when another brother of Duala Manga was appointed instead. This was Richard Din Manga Bell.

The French denied Prince Alexandre his father's throne for over thirty years despite his proven loyalty. This must have been because to appoint him would seem like recognition of power coming from a source other than France, and would enhance the power of the Bonadoo kingship. It could not easily fit in with the French policy towards the Dualas which was emerging by 1920.

The French may also have thought that Alexandre, as a very talented individual, might show hidden reserves of strength if given a position of authority. Even without this he was capable of taking a stand against humiliation of Africans. In late 1919 he sued a French officer who had hit him for failing to bow when passing; Africans were expected to bow or otherwise show deference when passing European officials. Because of Alexandre's importance among the Dualas and the need to conciliate them (within limits), the French took the case seriously. A court sentenced the French officer to mere confinement, but Carde protested that this was too light and the sentence was raised to 30 days' close arrest. Afterwards a directive was sent to army officers that Africans were not obliged to bow before them¹²⁰. This was not the last time that Prince Alexandre, a politically submissive but very proud

120. Joseph, op.cit., p. 355ff.

character, was to make a personal protest against racialism which others dared not make. This must have helped maintain a popularity which remained high despite his political attitude.

In 1920, and possibly again in 1921, Prince Alexandre Manga Bell returned to Paris; his return from France in 1922 seems to have been final¹²¹. It was possibly then, certainly at an early stage, that he was separated from his wife.

The return of Ndoumb'a Douala and his triumphal welcome can be seen as a climax to the Dualas' political movement, and his failure to lead them as a major deflating influence on that movement. It coincided with the coming into force, on 10 January 1920, of the Treaty of Versailles, which ended the provisional character of the French administration, and so made it no longer possible for Dualas to think the decision on their future was reversible. Perhaps by no coincidence, the French then took some action against dissident leaders, among the Bonadoo at least, and in the same year, 1920, removed the nearby rural Bassas and the urban African Strangers from the jurisdiction of the Duala Paramount Chiefs as far as administration was concerned (removal from the courts' jurisdiction was to follow in 1921).

121. Blaise Diagne to Minister, 16 July 1920; Note for Directeur des Affaires Politiques, Colonies Ministry, Paris, 18 May 1922; and related correspondence, file 10, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

The French in 1920 thus proceeded to certain measures which they had probably wanted to take for some time, against the Duala opposition. The more definitive establishment of their rule may have been a sufficient encouragement to take those measures. Another could well have been the attitude of Prince Alexandre, who was offered on a plate the leadership of a protest movement which was then about at its peak, and whose refusal to take it up was a decisive political event.

CHAPTER THREEACTION AND REACTION IN COMMERCE AND POLITICS,1920 TO 1927

After the Duala protests challenging the new colonial regime had failed, compromise was necessary after 1920. It was accompanied, however, by an impressive show of the nationalist spirit, first in the movement behind the Native Baptist Church (1921-23), then in the revival of the Bonadoo land case in 1925-6. There was still the normal Duala combination of co-operation and opposition.

At the same time the commercial boom, interrupted by the short slump of 1920, increased the wealth and success of the Duala planters. Dualas in commerce also did well then, but less so, for the new masters, while keen to encourage planters, tried to restrict African retail trading, and had some success.

As in all their history under colonial rule the Dualas' economic and political actions went together in time but did not have any clearly visible connection with each other. Protests regularly mentioned economic grievances, but it seems also that the success of the planters gave the Dualas a solid basis for their protests; they were freer to oppose French rule than the clerks, who could be disciplined or transferred. The clerks also followed the policy of collaboration to extract advantages, but they were more restricted than the planters, who were very like

the 18th century dissident nobleman in Europe: able to criticise the regime on the basis of a strong position under that regime through landed property.

Urban landlordism was another such basis of the Dualas' relatively unsubmitive position. This made urban land tenure a highly sensitive point. The frontal attack on it by the Germans in 1914 was so serious that to the Dualas it appeared very important to try to reverse that action.

Cameroun, Douala and the Mandate.

On 20 July 1922 the Council of the League of Nations, meeting in London, formally conferred a Mandate over Cameroun on France. The terms of the Mandate were much the same as for other "B" Mandates of France and Britain. France promised to be responsible "for the promotion to the utmost of the material and moral well-being and the social progress of its inhabitants".¹ There were to be no fortifications or military bases and no "native military force" except for local police purposes and the defence of the territory. On slavery, there was confirmation of the general Brussels (1890) and St. Germain (1919) Treaty obligations with the important addition of a clause banning all forced labour except for "essential public works and services".

1. See official text in Annual Report for French Cameroun 1922. These reports to the League of Nations are hereafter cited simply as "Annual Reports", any other annual reports being specified, e.g. Douala Circonscription Annual Report.

The Mandate enjoined equal commercial and economic rights for all League of Nations member states. There was to be freedom of conscience and worship within limits of public order and morality, and an equal right for all missionaries from League of Nations member states to reside in Cameroun and build religious edifices and schools, subject only to considerations of public order and good government.

France obtained the right to rule French Cameroun and French Togo virtually as colonies. French Cameroun was governed from the Colonial Ministry in Paris through Commissioners of the Gouverneur des Colonies rank in the French colonial service. It was separated(eventually) from AEF, but under the Mandate it need not have been.

In a book published in 1931 Chazelas said the Mandate idea involved recognition of the natives' right to eventual self-government². Africans who thought the time had come to claim this right were to receive little sympathy from Chazelas and other administrators in the Mandate era. But there were differences from ordinary colonial administration, small but not negligible.

The terms of the Mandate and the ideas implicit in them encouraged the belief that it was a temporary arrangement. For years the French were to encounter a belief that they were not going to stay. The League

2. V. Chazelas, Territoires Africains sous Mandat de la France: Cameroun et Togo, Paris 1931, p. 10.

could have taken the Mandate away from France, but this was never remotely likely. As far as the actual text of the Mandate was concerned there was no time limit. But the Mandate did introduce the idea of accountability to a public body other than the Colonial Ministry. The government in Cameroun was obliged, under Article 10 of the Mandate, to present an Annual Report to the League of Nations. From 1922 these Reports provided abundant information, useful today for the history of the Mandate. Each one was considered by the Permanent Mandates Commission in Geneva, which met twice a year but usually considered each Mandated Territory only once a year.

The PMC consisted mostly of people with colonial experience; Lugard was a member from 1923 to 1936³, and other members were also ex-governors. The Commission was anything but an anti-colonial body and its function was confined to examinations of the Annual Reports and questioning of the Mandatory governments' representatives about them. While the PMC could not, and as constituted would not want to, question the basic ideas of colonial government applied with little change in the Mandated territories, on matters concerning the observation of the Mandate terms it could question the government representative rigorously and critically. France had a Resident Representative, but quite often the

3. M. Perham, Lugard: The Years of Authority, p.645ff.

Commissioner, on leave, attended PMC sessions dealing with French Cameroun or French Togo⁴.

For Africans, particularly educated and alert ones like the Dualas, a most interesting aspect of the Mandate system was the right of petition. Africans in French colonies could send petitions to opposition Deputies and other politicians in France, but those in Cameroun and Togo could address a wider audience through petitions to the PMC. On 31 January 1923, however, the League Council ordered that all petitions should be sent through the Mandatory power; this meant that they would arrive with the official comments, which might reduce their chance of being considered. But the chances of anything being achieved by a petition were small anyway, as the Dualas were to discover. The PMC, unlike the United Nations Trusteeship Council later, could not send missions to the territories within its purview. In the last resort it had little power. On some matters it could probably be deceived and the grounds on which it could criticise the French administration were limited anyway.

There were two vital differences from French colonies. Mission schools could be established by missionaries of many countries with little restriction, and received official subsidies in Cameroun, as they did not in AOF; this meant that more education was

4. E. Tshisungu, Le Contrôle de la Société des Nations et l'Evolution des Mandats Français en Afrique, unpublished dissertation, Strasbourg.

available for Africans. More important was the absence of military conscription, a very severe imposition for Africans in AOF and AEF, whose absence was a real boon for Camerounians and Togolese. The French in Cameroun even restricted voluntary enlistments to the very limited needs of the permitted armed formations⁵.

The main administrative and juridical change in the first years after 1922 was the separation of French Cameroun from AEF on 1 January 1924. By then Cameroun had its own separate administration, directly under the Ministry. The French officials there, apart from technical staff, were of the ordinary colonial service, but the practice grew of keeping them in Cameroun for all their careers.

On 1 May 1921 the seat of administration was moved to Yaounde. Douala remained not only much the most important city for all purposes except administration, but also the seat of many administrative departments, notably the Railways and Ports, Customs and Lands Departments. On 1 June 1921 a Delegate in Douala was appointed with several important functions including supervision of the departments retaining head offices there. After a few years it became normal to combine his post with that of Chef de Circonscription for Douala, the holder of both being an important officer.

Carde was absent for some time in 1920-21, when Auguste-François Bonnacarrère acted as Commissioner. Carde

5. R. L. Buell, The Native Problem in Africa, Vol. II, p. 282-3.

returned about the time of the move of the capital. But on 7 March 1923 he left to become a well-known Governor-General of AOF. His successor, Théodore Marchand, was to be the most famous of all the governors of French Cameroun under the Mandate. On arrival there he was nearly 50 and had just been serving as Lieutenant-Governor of Gabon. After his nine years in Cameroun he was to leave an amazingly good reputation, like that of his contemporary Guggisberg in the Gold Coast. He certainly believed in a considerable amount of justice and fair play for Africans, and one of his subordinate officials recalled that he threatened instant dismissal for any French official who hit an African⁶, while he told all the Chefs de Circonscription to observe correct formalities and legality and avoid needless severity with Africans⁷.

Chazelas was in charge of Douala Circonscription at the time of the move to Yaounde, but in July 1921 he was replaced by Yves Nicol, who became Acting Delegate later that year⁸. Later M. Bétis was Chef de Circonscription and M. Chazal Delegate, but in March 1923 Bétis took both posts⁹. Then M. Fourcade became Chef de Circonscription and, when Bétis had sick leave, also Delegate. M. Truitard was appointed to both posts on

6. Interview, Pierre Chauleur, Paris 1973.

7. Circular, Marchand to Chefs de Circonscription, 9 Sept. 1925, file APA 11320/C, Cameroon Archives.

8. JOC 1 Jan. 1922.

9. JOC. 1 March 1922, 1 April 1922.

28 April 1925, and soon afterwards Chazelas returned to assume both¹⁰. But at the end of 1925 the post of Delegate was abolished, for reasons unstated.

An important Arrêté on 27 June 1921 defined the limits of Douala Circonscription, to cover the city and its suburbs, which would now form a "special administrative unit" entrusted to the Assistant to the Chef de Circonscription, and also neighbouring rural Bakoko, Abo, Wuri, Pongo, Yabassi, Banen and some other tribal areas¹¹. Two years later, however, the Circonscription was to be much reduced in area with the excision of Yabassi and Batongtou Subdivisions to make a new Yabassi Circonscription, by Arrêté of 13 July 1923¹². This increased the relative importance, already recognised in 1921 by the granting of special responsibilities for it to the Chef de Circonscription's Assistant, of the town in the still largely rural Circonscription.

Official Duala-French relations after 1920.

The first steps taken by the French in 1920 to slap down the Dualas, whom they considered pretentious and insubordinate because they did not willingly fit in with French administrative ideas, were recorded in the last chapter. For purposes of daily local government such as tax collection the nearby rural Bassas and the urban Strangers were placed under their own Paramount

10. JOC 1 April 1923, 1 Aug. 1923, 15 May 1925, 15 Aug. 1925.

11. JOC 1 August 1921.

12. JOC 1 August 1923.

Chiefs to separate them from the Duala "Kings". The next step in that direction (except insofar as the effort to cut out bigger African retailers, many of them Dualas, in 1920* was part of the same policy) was the Justice Decree of 13 April 1921, applied by Arrê[^]té of 26 May 1921. This ended the chiefs' criminal and civil court jurisdiction and reinforced French "direct administration".

On 12 July 1919 a Circular from Carde asked for views on the chiefly courts from the Chefs de Circonscription. For Douala Chazelas recommended that they should be retained, with reforms of which the most important would be an end to criminal jurisdiction. For civil cases, he said, their value was shown by the number of cases handled, about 600 per month, and the small number of appeals, about 50 per month¹³. The Decree of 1921 went considerably further than this and abolished formal exercise of judicial power by chiefs altogether. However, conciliation in civil cases/^{was} provided for by a second Arrê[^]té following the main one, on 1 July 1921, and this in practice meant that the chiefs dealt with many disputes; they often arranged the conciliation which prevented cases from reaching the courts.

But there was no regular role for chiefs now in civil cases, and no role at all in criminal cases, which were all handled by the new Tribal Courts or tribunaux de race. Despite their names they were headed by the

* see below.

13. Chef de Circonscription to Commissioner, 2 Oct. 1919, File APA 10934/A, Cameroon Archives.

Chefs de Circonscription or subordinate officials appointed by the Commissioner. Each court also had African Assessors, who were to have a deliberative role in civil cases but only a consultative one in criminal cases. They were courts of first and last instance for a number of specified matters concerning people who were not French citizens. However, a Court of Homologation was set up with power to review heavier sentences and to order re-trials if it saw fit¹⁴.

A third Arrêté, on 13 July 1921, laid down the locations and compositions of the new Tribal Courts, including four created in Douala Circumscription: at Douala, Kake, Yabassi and Batongtou¹⁴.

From then on Africans were directly subjected to European officials in criminal justice. It was a Frenchman who, in every case, gaoler or fined an African either in the Tribal Courts or under the Indigénat. After 1921 the great majority of offenders, and many people who were innocent and law-abiding by all normal standards, were punished by the Indigénat as before. It was thoroughly revised by an Arrêté on 4 October 1924 which provided for the standard Indigénat penalties (two weeks' imprisonment or 100 francs' fine) for disorderly acts, false rumours liable to disturb the peace, disrespect for authority, seditious language, protests "known to be false" at regular administrative actions (apart from

14. Report ... until 1 July 1921, appendix with full text, JOC 1 June 1921.

appeals to higher authority), and departure from one's home Circonscription without prior approval.

Africans suffered great oppression under the Indigénat. Dualas, who were spared the burdens of regular forced labour and the exceptional conscription of forced labourers for railway building (of which more shortly), were subject like others to the Indigénat, and were to complain of its effects frequently. Although they had begun to feel the weight of French "justice" even before 1921, and although the Tribal Courts then may have been less arbitrary than the Indigénat because there was always a trial before African Assessors and the possibility (in effect, though the term "appeal" was avoided) of appeal to the Homologation Court, the ending of chiefs' criminal jurisdiction was a blow keenly felt. It was not only a further step to undermine Dualas' established supremacy over neighbouring tribes. It was an attack on tradition and a major addition to colonial subjection. In 1922 a chief in Bonaberi was dismissed for illegally running a criminal court¹⁵.

However, it became normal to appoint leading Duala "Notables" as Assessors. In fact the Titular and Reserve assessors appointed to the Douala tribunal de race were among the most prominent Africans in the administrative system. They were paid 1,000 francs per year each plus an allowance of 10 francs per day of the court's session. Their prestige and influence were probably greater than those of any other Africans in the

15. Buell, op.cit., p. 313. He did not name the chief.

pay of the government apart from the chiefs. Other Duala elite members were appointed to the Homologation Court, which sat in Douala, and whose four members, two European and two African, were replaced annually. In 1925 the African members were the Paramount Chiefs of Bell and Akwa, Richard Bell and Ebongue Akwa.

Thus the French continued to recognise and reinforce, to some extent, the influence of the Duala chiefs and elders, though they also wanted to reduce that of the chiefs, at least, below the previous level. They had to reckon with the power of the traditional elite, even while restricting it to some extent. The early 1920's saw a continuation of anti-colonial feeling among the Dualas, in fact a definite resurgence of it in the popular movement in support of the Native Baptist Church. In response to this the French thought it necessary to have regular consultants with Duala representatives, and because of the people's attachment to chieftancy the only representatives with whom dialogue was worthwhile were the four Paramount Chiefs.

Consultations with them began in 1923 and dealt regularly with many aspects of local administration¹⁶. In 1924 they were held weekly and included Notables also¹⁷. The Annual Report to the League of Nations for 1924, mentioning the meetings, made the revealing comment that the Dualas were "very attached to the monarchical system",

16. Annual Report 1923, p. 140.

17. Annual Report 1924, p. 110.

with their politically-minded young men calling for independence under their "Kings" in spite of French ideas¹⁷. The French ideas in question may have been Republican prejudices which many French colonial officials had, but Dualas had no reason at all to adopt those. Among the Dualas anti-chieftancy policies were aimed at making it easier to control the people*, but were only partially enforceable as the report just cited admitted.

Representation of Africans started with the Court Assessors and continued with the unofficial consultations with Paramount chiefs and then, at the end of 1924, with the creation of Agricultural Commissions, one in each Circonscription¹⁸. These reflected the government's concern to raise both food and cash^(crop)/production with the voluntary or induced help of the Africans; among the Dualas the measure had little importance as they were already growing a great deal of local food and exported produce.

From 1925 the functions of the Agricultural Commissions, with many other functions, were taken over by a new institution providing for permanent African representation for consultative purposes. The Conseil de Notables, set up by Arrêté of 9 October 1925, was an important innovation. Each Circonscription was to have

* This was not true among the Ewondos at least; their untraditional chief Karl/Charles Atangana, who retreated with the Germans and went with them as far as Spain in the First World War, later had his chieftancy restored and even extended, to cover the Banés as well as the Ewondos, under the French, and ruled them with a rod of iron as an efficient French gendarme.

18. Annual Report 1924, p. 103.

one such Council, to aid the Chef de Circonscription "in examination of financial, economic and social matters", to enlighten the government on the resources and needs of the Circonscription, and to "express the wishes of the native population"¹⁹. Regular consultations of African representatives had begun before but now they were made permanent, and, more important, the Chef de Circonscription was now obliged to consult the Conseil on taxation, forced labour, public works and public health measures; thus it could discuss most of the regular impositions on the Africans. The Conseil was organised in each Circonscription on tribal lines, with proportional representation of tribes according to numbers of taxpayers.

The powers of the Conseil de Notables were small, but were bound to vary locally according to their composition. Among the Dualas the method of selection, laid down for all Circonscriptions, was certain to ensure that traditional chiefs and elders were chosen. Members of each Conseil had to be local owners of land and houses with property "of well established origin". From this large group of eligible people lists were to be drawn up by the chiefs. They had to be approved by the Chef de Circonscription and then by the Commissioner who made the actual appointments, but in practice the chiefs had a new and important power conferred on them. The government must have known that the new measure would increase the

19. Text of Arrêté in JOC 1 Nov. 1925.

power of the Duala Chiefs, and accepted this as inevitable because of the Duala's attachment to a "monarchical system".

Consultation with African representatives was meant only to aid submission to normal colonial impositions, including taxation. For tax collection an elaborate administrative set-up was instituted; regular counts were made of people liable to pay head-tax, tax-tokens were given to chiefs to exchange for tax payment, and the chiefs brought in the total amounts collected, to be checked by European administrative officers in comparison with the number of tokens issued and returned. This was the normal colonial tax collection system, and as in other colonies it was more all-pervading than any other branch of government. People had to carry their tax tokens with them and produce them on demand. Duala had refused to pay tax on occasions, even as late as 1919, and there were to be continual complaints, but they do not seem to have resented their chiefs' role as tax collectors, probably realising that the chiefs had no choice.

Besides the head-tax a new tax was introduced by Arrêté of 10 November 1923, the Medical Aid tax. Fixed at one tenth of the head-tax rate, its aim was to pay for the Africans' free medical treatment. Later its proportion to the head-tax was made flexible. In Douala and Edea Circonscription^s in 1926 the head-tax was 20 francs, the medical aid tax 4 francs²⁰.

20. JOC 1 October 1925.

Besides taxation of the normal sort most Africans under French rule had to pay the labour-tax or Prestation, forced labour to be done for the government each year. It was barely permissible under the Mandate provisions on forced labour, but was enforced by an Arrêté of 1 July 1921, which laid it down as a maximum of ten days' work per year in areas near to the labourers' homes²¹. Africans were allowed to commute their Prestation for cash, and from the start most Dualas did so²². Besides the Prestations Camerounians could also be conscripted for up to nine months for forced labour for public works. This was carried out with horrific consequences for the extension of the Central Railway to Yaounde, started in 1924. Dualas were not affected by this, nor, perhaps did people in Douala suffer as much as other Camerounians from conscription of forced labour for businessmen, which although contrary to the Mandate and to the explicit provisions of two decrees on African labour recruitment (4 August 1922 and 9 July 1925) seems to have occurred quite often. But they were probably victims at times of the apparently common practice of rounding up people under the Indigénat to provide an irregular supply of forced labour, sometimes for private employers.

For enforcing their rule and impositions the French established by a decree of 28 June 1925 the Garde Indigène and Milice, two small armed formations permitted

21. Annual Report 1923, p. 10,11.

22. Gouellain, op. cit., p. 197.

under the Mandate. The former was comparable to the French gendarmerie. In Douala it was replaced by Arrêté of 7 November 1925 by a special police force, but the militia, a mobile corps which could be sent anywhere as needed, continued to be used there.

Slump, Boom and African planters and traders.

The import-export trade of French Cameroun rose considerably after 1918, and most went through Douala; of the other two big seaports of German Kamerun, Victoria was in the British zone and Kribi never recovered its former importance. Dualas were therefore well placed to benefit from the expansion of trade, both as traders and as planters. Among traders West African immigrants were also numerous, but among growers of cocoa and palm products Dualas and Bassas were predominant.

Plantations provided good income for the Duala elite after 1918, thanks to their efforts and the encouragement of the French, who admired their skill²³ and relied on them rather than following the disastrous agricultural policies followed in some other French colonies.

Exports of palm kernels rose from 7,057 metric tons in 1917 to 38,601 (to the nearest ton) in 1919; for cocoa the rise was less spectacular, from 1,078

23. Douala Circonscription Annual Report 1918, quoted in Gouellain, op.cit., p. 176-7.

to 3,341 tons²⁴. A third of all the oilseeds came from Douala Circonscription at this time, two-thirds of all the cocoa, and nearly all the timber²⁵. The Duala elite had extensive timber concessions as well as plantations. Europeans were important producers of timber, but not of crops at this time. Bassas produced a large amount of palm oil and kernels in Douala and Edea Circonscriptions, but Duala planters were important for those products and probably most of the approximately 2,000 tons of cocoa from Douala Circonscription was from their plantations — which also extended beyond the Circonscription into British Cameroons.

Prices of palm oil, palm kernels and cocoa rose steadily from 1918 to the middle of 1920, but then fell in the world recession of 1920-21. At the peak of the initial postwar boom in early 1920, palm kernels were selling for 1,750 francs per ton, a rise of nearly 1,000 in a few months²⁶. Cocoa was fetching 1,250 francs per ton in January 1920 and as much as 3,000 in June²⁶. The general turnover of trade expanded unevenly because imports did not immediately start coming to match the growth of exports and of purchasing power. In 1919 the firms were selling all their stocks of imported goods, hardly controlling sales at all, much less restraining sales prices²⁷. For a time Douala was without paraffin

24. "Exposé général de la situation, 1920" in file APA 11937/A, Cameroon Archives.

25. Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p. 178.

26. *ibid.*, p. 199.

27. *ibid.*, p. 177.

and it had to be extracted from the nearby oil-bearing swamps at Logbaba. Other imported goods were short as well. Then, however, the firms placed big orders, on such a scale that the Commissioner warned that the goods could not be sold if produce prices fell²⁴. This prediction came true very soon afterwards.

In 1918 official classification of business enterprises in Douala showed that there were 29 with first-class trade licences and 67 second-class licences²⁷. The criteria for assessment for trade licences seem to have been changed at times, but most enterprises with first-class licences were always the big firms of the usual West Coast sort. In 1918 11 were British, with 95 branches in Douala Circonscription, and 12 French, with 48 branches. These branches may have been very small stores, but their number indicates the importance, even in 1918, of trade in the Douala Circonscription, where so much of the produce was grown before being exported through Douala.

John Holt, which was importing more than other firms in 1918, remained a major firm, if not the most important of all, for many years longer. Generally British firms were to keep their leading position well into the Mandate era; in 1920 Chazelas' Annual Report listed 15 British, 12 French and 7 African import-export firms²⁸. The Africans' share was not negligible at

28. Douala Circonscription Annual Report 1920, p.23, file APA 11873, Cameroon Archives.

that time. Besides Mandessi Bell and Sam Deido other Dualas prominent later as import-exporters, such as Samuel Moundo Esoukan and Erdmann Eteki, may have started by then.

Even more remarkably, Chazelas said that of 17 enterprises specialising in imports alone 15 were African²⁸. This no doubt indicated a rush to take advantage of the demand for imported goods, by African businessmen who may have found no equivalent opportunity in produce-buying for export at the top (Mandessi Bell) level. If so, many may have been ruined by the 1920 slump, but for a short time their success was impressive.

The number of branches of the firms was very high for a population of about 200,000. It may have been inflated partly by the influx of many competing new European firms, mostly French. But the sudden expansion of exports and of African purchasing power, which seems to have started before the Armistice, may have been a sufficient explanation. Among these store and shop keepers and produce buying agents other Camerounians, and other West Africans, were numerous, but Dualas exploited their advantageous position for trading in this line which was, of course, very familiar to them. Credit was commonly given to such traders despite government disapproval.

The 1920-21 Slump was short but severe. Cocoa prices fell suddenly and spectacularly, from 3 francs per kg. in June 1920 to between 50 and 75 centimes in

early 1921. The fall in palm oil and palm kernel prices was similar. Farmers stopped growing and picking to await better times. Overnight firms were stocked with unsaleable imported goods. The total value of external trade fell in 1921 by 42 per cent to 54m francs²⁹.

The revival after the Slump was rapid and became a several years' boom. Cocoa exports rose slowly at first, to 3,457 metric tons in 1922 and 3,470 in 1923; but in 1925 they were up to 4,917 tons, in 1926 to 5,349. Palm oil exports rose from 2,210 tons in 1922 to 3,095 in 1923, and up to 5,812 in 1926; the rise for palm kernels was similar, from 23,007 tons to 26,783 and, in 1926, 35,479 tons. Total exports rose to 42,305 tons in 1923 and 113,085 in 1925. From 1920 and 1925 the tonnage exported rose by as much as 206 per cent; for imports the rise was 73 per cent³⁰. The trade expansion was shown in the rise in shipping at Douala, from 130 ships calling in 1920 to 192 in 1922 and 249 in 1926³¹.

This expansion of trade meant an expansion of all sorts of business in Douala, and an increase in wealth of which a considerable portion ended up in the Dualas' hands. Above all Dualas benefited as cash crop producers. Africans produced 94.3 per cent of exported goods in 1920 and 82.4 per cent in 1925³², when small production of rubber and tobacco by European planters had begun. Little

29. Gouellain, op.cit., p.199.

30. Annual Report, 1923, p.131; 1925, p.69ff.; 1926, p.66.

31. Annual Report, 1923, p.121; 1927, p.119.

32. Gouellain, op.cit., p. 215-6.

was to be added to that European production until the 1930's, and cocoa and palm production remained all African. As noted Bassas produced some cocoa and much of the exported palm produce by 1920, and by the late 1920s the Betis and other Africans were challenging the Dualas lead in cocoa. But for a few years the Duala planters had their heyday, adding notably to the territory's exports at profit to themselves.

An important survey of the Dualas' plantations appears in the Douala Circonscription Annual Report for 1920³³. The author, Chazelas, said that, "A Duala works in business, administration or workyards until he has saved up a sufficient sum to start and establish a plantation; then he lives off his plantation." In Nyombe Subdivision a thorough survey of cocoa farms found a total of 131,622 trees, mainly planted by Dualas. There were hundreds of plantations owned by Bell, Akwa and Deido Dualas on the Mungo, Wouri, Dibamba, Dibeng and Nseke rivers. Some Africans had cocoa plantations of over 50,000 trees. Dualas were also in the lead in food cultivation, selling important quantities of maize, cocoyams and bananas to the government from their Nyombe Subdivision farms.

There were regulations for starting of plantations, but the government did not enforce them. Instead, after instituting by Arrêté of 24 April 1924 a decoration, the Mérite Indigène, mainly to reward successful African farmers³⁴,

33. Douala Annual Report 1920, p.7, file APA 11873, Cameroon Archives.

34. JOC 15 May 1924.

it awarded this frequently to Duala planters, wishing to encourage their efforts – Chazelas specifically held up the Gold Coast as the example to follow³³. Among the first who were awarded the *Mérite Indigène* were Sam Deido, who received it for an 8,500-tree cocoa farm at Ndogpenda and food farms; Dikongue Esaka, for a 10,000-tree cocoa farm on the Dibombe and for maize, cocoyam and banana plantations; Kingue Dika of Boneleke (Akwa), "one of the oldest farmers in the region", for a 2,500-tree cocoa farm on the Dibamba and for food cultivation; and the Paramount Chief of Bell, Richard Manga Bell, for two plantations on the Mungo river and other production³⁵. Richard Bell, it was noted, "interests himself particularly in agricultural questions and makes the natives of the region profit by his knowledge and experience"³⁵. This was a reference to his Agronomy diploma. The government also helped with extension advice, e.g. for cocoa fermentation³³.

For Dualas of the elite – and that category, as will be explained later, was large – plantations were an essential part of life in the 1920s. Information about a paramount chief, a district chief or an elder of that period will include, as a matter of course, details about his plantations. Businessmen added plantations to their other business activities. Clerks and clergymen also had their plantations. These people

35. JOC 1 January 1925.

whose work kept them for much of the time in Douala or, in the case of the clerks, in other parts of the territory could not devote so much attention to their plantations as chiefs and elders could. For some Dualas plantations were the major livelihood at this time.

In a pseudo-autobiographical account of the life of a planter, based on the experience of real planters, the Duala journalist Kala-Lobe has pictured the life of a successful Duala, "Mun'a Moto" (= "son of man"), with plantations — such as many had — in British Cameroons as well as on the French side. He wrote of the 1920's, "Life was ideal on the plantations. There was no particular problem in obtaining manpower. The land labourers responded by themselves to the call of the soil. On the immense cleared spaces, every man had an acre of personal land where his wives grew foodstuffs: macabos^{*}, plantains, yams, sweet potatoes and all sorts of vegetables. Among the men reigned the most harmonious community life. We knew nothing of end-of-the-month worries. Every family had enough to eat and sold its surplus of produce as it pleased". Mun'a Moto had "fine houses of hard materials" in Douala, but, "This city saw me only once or twice a year, at the time of the great cocoa sales"³⁶.

Mandessi Bell had broad acres under cocoa on the Mungo river; it seems that there was a sizeable community on his land there, for in 1926 he was given a timber felling concession on the Mungo 2,300 metres upstream

* cocoyams, of the large sort, Xanthosoma sagittifolium, referred to in this thesis as "cocoyams". The other sort of cocoyam called taro in French, Colocasia esculentum, is also widely grown in Cameroun.

36. I. Kala-Lobe, "the Greatness and Decline of "Mun'a Moto," Présence Africaine (Paris) no. 37, 2nd quarter 1961, English version, p.69ff.

from "Mandessi-Belldorf"³⁷. Despite his varied other interests he was such a keen farmer that in 1926 he could not sign a vital document concerning the Bonadoo land claim, in which he played a leading role, because he was away on his plantations.

Other Dualas were sometimes absentee landlords, and on all plantations the actual labour was performed by non-Duala labourers. An official French report in 1925 said Dualas did not employ members of their families on their plantations, and did not work themselves there; they had not developed family farms like those of the Abo, Bassa and other nearby tribes³⁸. This was an overstatement, for farmers like the Mun'a Moto of the story worked on the plantations in the sense that any active farmer "works" without necessarily wielding a hoe himself; and besides the big plantations Dualas had smaller farms which may have been cultivated by their wives. But the report was right in saying that non-Duala labourers were commonly employed on the plantations. It mentioned Bakokos, "Yaoundes", Makas, Boulous, "Grassfields", Balongs, Balis and Bakossis, recruited on the spot or even from their home areas³⁸. The French Protestant Mission said the labourers on the plantations in the Mungo valley were in fact slaves³⁹, but although this had been true before it was probably ceasing to be so. It is unlikely that in the 1920's the labourers were servile in any real sense; they could not have been bought or taken by force from areas as

37. JOC 1 December 1926.

38. Douala Circonscription Annual Report 1925, quoted in Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p.208-9.

39. van Slageren, *op.cit.*, p. 144-5.

distant as the Maka country, east of Yaounde. On their conditions of work Kala-Lobe's account may not be much idealised, for the official report just quoted said the Duala plantations lived as at home, with plenty of food and gifts; the planters paid their taxes and money to commute their Prestation obligations, and showed more interest in them than European planters would³⁸. If they often left after short spells, as the same report said, this may have been because they had only come to earn limited sums before going home or to places with financially better possibilities. It is striking that people came from British Cameroons to work on the Duala plantations, for many Camerounians were fleeing to British Cameroons throughout the Mandate period.

Dualas negotiated with the local tribes for the use of land for the plantations, but the wide extent and wealth of the plantations certainly helped maintain the Dualas' local supremacy. Dualas came to refer to the Wouri, Mungo, Dibamba and other rivers whose banks were lined with Duala plantations as "our rivers".

The French showed little apparent concern about this, although they had been so anxious to remove other tribes from Duala influence. This suggests that they may not have had a political motive in the action taken in 1920 to reduce the number of major African traders working for the firms – buying produce and selling imported goods – by means of an enormous increase in trade licence fees. The people mainly affected, Dualas and non-Camerounian immigrants, were the Africans least

amenable to French control, and there may have been some political satisfaction in cutting them down to size. But the motive for the measure seems to have been closer control over retailing, perhaps simply for the sake of closer control, or to help the firms prevent rises in produce ^(prices) through competition among buying agents; or possibly to help licence fee collection⁴⁰, though this is unlikely as the measure was obviously not aimed at increasing revenue.

Anyway, whatever the reasons, by an Arrêté of 7 October 1920 the minimum trade licence fee in Douala was raised twenty times, from 20 francs to 400. Earlier in that year there had been 710 traders with licences granted for 20 francs each, while 77 paid 300 francs each for licences for bigger businesses and 38 paid 400 for operating the major African enterprises⁴⁰. The measure seems to have been aimed specifically at shopkeepers, and many of these were unable to pay the greatly increased licence fees, especially as that was a time when cocoa prices were falling at an average rate of about 80 francs per ton each week (and when credit was probably drying up). Numerous Nigerian, Dahomean and Togolese traders had to close up shop and go home⁴⁰. This had undoubtedly been intended. It was a deliberately prohibitive increase meant to cut down the number of traders, which the government thought was too great.

It may have succeeded in doing this for a time, with no positive results for the firms or anyone else. But the Camerounains in Douala still had other trading

40. Gouellain, op.cit., p. 198.

opportunities, if less attractive, because market stall fees were not raised so much (they were the same in 1924 as in 1919 for sales of imported and manufactured goods and butcher's meat), and in 1925, although the fee for a trade licence for "internal trade", which must have been payable by many shopkeepers, was as high as 600 or 700 francs p.a.⁴¹, it was possible to have for only 150 francs p.a. a licence to run a shop selling small articles and not buying produce, if there were no employees; the provision against employees was probably easy to evade. Thus the long-term impact of the measure of 1920 is hard to assess. Many Africans unable to pay the increased charges then could have saved up later in the boom years, or obtained the necessary money ^{from} the many sources of capital available to Dualas (plantations, town land rents, clerks' pay, etc) to start again.

That the number of "middlemen" working for the firms was not seriously affected is suggested by the reports of the government itself. In 1923 the Annual Report said middlemen were indispensable and their competition would prevent price-fixing by them (the writer did not know, or did not care, that it might push up produce prices also). It added, "European business is more and more concentrated; native commerce is being dispersed, aided by the rise in raw material prices"⁴². The remark on European business is puzzling as the firm were in fact establishing branch offices in many other towns. But the reference to African traders spreading

41. JOC 15 October 1925.

42. Annual Report 1923, p. 133.

more and more over the country is clear.

To confirm further that the measure regarding trade licences in 1920 had not achieved its object, the 1924 Annual Report said, "The 'clarks' (sic) of business firms and businessmen working independently have stocks and cash in abundance and their operations are often considerable. The majority are Dualas. They are joined by Lagosians, Gabonese, Sierra Leoneans, coming from neighbouring colonies, and also more advanced Camerounians — Bakokos, Boulous, 'Yaoundes', Batangas or 'Grassfields'.⁴³" Opportunities must in fact have been abundant if immigrants came from a considerable distance to take them up alongside the Dualas who were much more favourably placed.

Typical of many successful Dualas traders in the years of expansion was Johannes Sam Deido, son of the businessman. He left government service in 1920 to become an agent for buying cocoa and palm oil for Holt, CFAO and other firms at Nkongsamba; later he traded at Yabassi and Ebolowa and started cocoa and palm plantations and a timber concession⁴⁴. This example, and the documents quoted, suggest that Duala planters, traders and clerks were of the same small group. This would help people obtain capital from near relations to start their enterprises, though Johannes Sam Deido may have had an exceptional flying start with the help of his father.

The overall figures for trade expansion from 1920 and 1925 show that the value of exports rose less than the

43. Annual Report 1924, p. 60.

44. Interview, Johannes Sam Deido.

tonnage (146 per cent compared with 206) and the value of imports rose much more than the tonnage (166 per cent as against 73)⁴⁵. While detailed figures for produce prices show big rises for cocoa and palm products, and while many of the imports in this period were bulk government purchases and not imports of consumer goods, produce prices alone would suggest that Africans' purchasing power rose only slightly if at all. *Actually* many Africans had other sources of income besides produce trading, and these may have risen much more than the average produce price rise: Dualas' income from business and rents, for example. In fact the figures for imports of certain goods (e.g. cotton cloth and dried, tinned and salt fish) indicate a large rise in African purchasing power⁴⁶. That purchasing power was, then and later, heavily concentrated in Douala, where imported goods were cheapest and higher incomes most widespread.

Railway traffic fell for passengers in 1920-21, not for goods; thereafter figures for both rose rapidly. The railhead towns, Nkongsamba and Eseka, were important commercial centres, but it was probably for non-commercial reasons alone that the extension of the Central Railway to the new seat of government, Yaounde, was pursued from 1924. For this thousands of forced labourers were brutally conscripted and forced to work, and many died; the Bassa village of Njock became a byword

45. Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p. 215-6.

46. Annual Report 1923, p. 130: 1926, p. 66.

for the Africans' sufferings in this infamous episode of French rule, whose reality was concealed in part at the time (perhaps even from Marchand, whose reputation as a humane paternalist may have survived this because he was, apparently, easily fooled) but has since been well documented⁴⁷.

Some other minor installations for the railway were added in the boom years⁴⁸; work on the dredging of the Douala harbour channel was begun in 1923, but was halted for some time later⁴⁹. The main work on new harbour installations was to start in 1926, as part of the general plan for mise en valeur of the French empire called after the Minister of the Colonies, M. Sarraut.

Types of business activity of Douala.

The main categories of business run by individuals or companies based in Douala were much the same throughout the Mandate period. Including both business^{es} operating in the town and those run in the interior by people based in Douala, and both African and European enterprises, there were the following main categories:-

- (1) Large-scale sales of imported goods;
- (2) Produce buying for export;

47. See Permanent Mandates Commission reports: 9th session (8-25 June 1926), p. 65ff.; 11th session (7 July 1927), pp.30, 202; 13th session (12-29 June 1928), p. 83. Also Annual Reports for 1925, p.46 and 1926, p. 6ff; P.Billard, La Circulation au Sud-Cameroun, p.60-3; Buell, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 322ff.; H.-R. Manga Mado, Complaintes d'un Forçat, Yaounde 1970.

48. Billard, op.cit., p. 85.

49. Annual Report, 1923, p. 11-12; 1925, p. 60.

- (3) Primary production of goods;
- (4) Local processing industries;
- (5) Local "service" industries;
- (6) Retailing of imported goods; and
- (7) Retailing of local goods.

The first two activities were the normal ones of the big West Coast firms. These continued with little basic change the dual business of the European "factory". In French the term factorerie was still used at this time in Douala, but the English term "Import-Export" was commonly used. Many firms, however, concentrated on imports or on exports exclusively. Of the Import-Export firms R. & W. King in 1928 bought 1,805 tons of French Cameroun's exported palm oil (a third of the total), 9,922 tons of the palm kernels, and 1,602 tons of the cocoa⁵⁰. Among the new French firms some were ephemeral but the Etablissements Tabourel was quite successful after being started as an Import-Export firm in 1924⁵¹, and several others were doing well by the time of the Great Slump. After 1926, when German firms resumed business, the most important Import-Export firms in Douala were Holt, King, CFAO, CFSO (CCSO), Société du Haut Ogooué, Tabourel, Etablissements Mas, the Comptoirs Sénégalais, J.A.M. Grenouilleau, the Deutsch Kamerun Gesellschaft (DKG), and the well-known Anglo-Greek Paterson Zochonis; with the few but important Duala

50. F. Pedler, op.cit., p. 156.

51. JOC 1 May 1924.

businessmen in that line.

In primary production the role of the Dualas has been sufficiently stressed. Such production was for local use as well as for export, palm oil and kernels being for both purposes; cocoa was only for export, but Dualas grew local food crops on a large scale, near the town and further inland along the rivers. Bassas near the town also grew food. European plantations were unimportant then, but primary production also included timber, and here both Africans and Europeans based in Douala were active in the 1920's. Regular gazette notices of felling permits all over Douala Circonscription indicate that this was another common enterprise of the Duala elite. Besides permis de coupe there were also permis de chantier which apparently also covered felling, but perhaps sawing also. Mandessi Bell in 1924 received an unusually extensive timber concession, covering 2,500 square metres west of the Northern Railway between kilometres 111 and 116⁵².

Only in timber production did European productive enterprises benefit notably from the expansion of exports and the rise in their prices in the 1920's. Otherwise Africans obtained whatever benefit accrued to the original producers from the rise in prices of cocoa (45 per cent), palm oil (106 per cent) and palm kernels (119 per cent) between 1920 and 1925⁵³. However much their profits

52. JOC 1 July 1924.

53. Gouellain, op.cit., p. 215-6.

were reduced by those taken by the firms and their agents, in the boom years the African farmers did not do badly. Anyway, among the Dualas the traders were the brothers, uncles and cousins of the planters and even of some of the exporters; also of many owners of property leased to European businessmen and their firms.

Sawmilling accounted for most of the local processing of raw materials (item 4 in the above list) at this time. Mandessi Bell had a large sawmill at Bojongo and other African entrepreneurs ran their sawmills; Din Eboumbou, a prominent businessman, was awarded a permit to start a timber enterprise including making of planks and rafters in 1926⁵⁴. The Public Works Department had its sawmill at Bonaberi and several Europeans started theirs; in 1921 Demangeot père et fils was advertising a steam-powered sawmill at Deido⁵⁵. The other local processing industries in the 1920s seem to have been small oil mills and brickworks.

"Service" enterprises (item 5) ranged widely from traditional small enterprises of carpenters, carvers, masons, barbers, healers, and musicians, of which there is little record in documents, to more modern African and expatriate enterprises. Africans must have had an important role in the building industry which did well in the 1920s, but a European building contractor, a Yugoslav

54. Minutes of 8 May 1926 meeting of Conseil d'Administration, file Cameroun AP 1/10, Archives SOM, Paris.

55. JOC 1 July 1921.

named Henry Schmidt, was established in Douala by 1921 and even claimed to have won many contracts by then⁵⁵.

Many Africans must have made money by canoe transport in the Douala area, but services by motor and steam-boats in the rivers and creeks were run mainly by Europeans. In 1922 J. F. Humarau et Cie. was running services with the steam-boat Lens from Douala as far as Santa Isabel, Rio Muni and São Tomé, well out into the ocean⁵⁶. The European shipping lines calling at Douala had agents there.

The hotel and café-bar business was mainly if not wholly run by Europeans, but one café and bar was run for Africans by Nassif; by the 1930s, if not earlier, Emile Fischer had another.

Private doctors and lawyers were operating in Douala by the early 1920s: Europeans, for at that time no Camerounians had qualified for those professions. Dr. Narcisse le Bris, a former army medical officer, had established his surgery in Akwa by 1922⁵⁷; he was to live there for years, as a litigious local "character". Dr. Michaut was also practising in Douala in 1925⁵⁸; he is not to be confused with Jean Michaut of the SHO (Société du Haut Ogooué), like him a long-lasting resident of Douala. Two well-known French lawyers, Me. Petitcol and Me. Fouletier, had set up practice by 1926 in Douala, where they were to spend many years.

56. JOC 1 June 1922.

57. JOC 1 October 1922.

58. JOC 1 March 1925.

For Africans the most important line of business was retailing (items 6 and 7), in shops, at the markets, and by the roadside. Besides the main Douala market there was another at Bonaberi. In 1924 market stall fees at both were fixed at 20 centimes per day for sellers of raw local produce and such cooked food as bread and rice, and 50 for sale of imported items, locally woven cloth, manufactured goods, and butcher's meat⁵⁹. Some food came from as far away as the Yaounde and Fouban areas. Fish was from nearby, but meat was brought from further afield by Hausas — also the main hawkers in Douala — and also by a French firm, the Cie. Pastorale of Louis Bonhomme, which successfully entered into the long-distance cattle marketing business normally left to Africans in colonial West Africa. Imported goods retailed included rice, stockfish, salt, cigarettes, paraffin, cloth, clothing, mirrors, and house ornaments which in those days often included portraits of European kings. The prominence of Dualas in retailing has been noted.

For all commercial purposes the French franc became the only legal currency, but not for many years. Gradually marks, sterling and other currencies were called in, and all currency apart from French coins and Banque de l'Afrique Occidentale notes was outlawed by Arrêté of 10 February 1926.

The French Cameroun Chamber of Commerce was set

59. JOC 15 June 1924.

up by Arrê^é of 22 July 1921, with headquarters in Douala. It was a semi-official body created to advise the government regularly on a variety of matters concerning trade and business, its members being appointed by the Commissioner. Most of the members were European businessmen, and it was their interests that the Chamber was to impress regularly on the Delegate who normally represented the Commissioner at its meetings. At first the full members numbered 15: eight European area or branch managers of firms (called directeurs in French), two European industriels, two European heads of agricultural enterprises, a shipping line agent or captain, and two Africans, a planter and a businessman.

Predictably enough, the first Africans appointed to the Chamber, by Arrê^é of 11 August 1921, were Mandessi Bell as a planter and Njo Eteki as a businessman. They were reappointed in 1924, as were several of the Europeans. Joseph Mas, an important French Import-Export entrepreneur, was appointed in 1921, together with the local Douala managers of Holt, King, CFAO, CFSO, SHO, PZ and the BAO.

The composition of the Chamber was often altered later. In 1926 the membership was enlarged and made elective⁶⁰. This last change was important as it applied also to the small but not derisory African representation. Now their three representatives (two full, one reserve) were to be elected by an electoral

60. Arrê^é 5 June 1926, JOC 15 June 1926.

college including holders of the higher-class trade licences and senior employees of African firms. For the first time Camerounians elected representatives; but it is not clear how many traders voted in the electoral college*, nor how the arrangements worked out in practice. After a few years the elections of African members of the Chamber were discontinued; from the 1932 reorganisation, at the latest, African members were appointed again, European ones elected.

Expansion and Development of the Town.

The economic boom led to considerable spending on property in Douala. Many German properties were sold under the terms of the Treaty of Versailles after 1920. The process was a complicated one which lasted for several years. By 1924 most of the properties not pre-empted by the government had been auctioned off; a number were bought by Africans.

The sale of these properties indicated the rapid enrichment of a number of Europeans and Africans in the early 1920s. Some firms had been able to use German properties while they were in the hands of the Administrateur-Séquestre, and the existence of many good German buildings may have meant less expenditure on new ones. The government, which had for years been using German buildings at Bonanjo, and which moved most of its offices away from Douala in 1921, had little need

* The 1928 electoral list in the JOC of 15 May 1928 is puzzling; far more people were apparently qualified than the 76 listed.

to erect new buildings in Douala, and was restricting expenditure severely in those years⁶¹. But in 1924-5 it was building a new hospital wing for Africans, a Customs warehouse, and a post office for Bonaberi. The 1920s boom may not have led to much new solid building in Douala, except by Africans. They already had many well built modern houses by then; the *Mérite Indigène* was awarded to Daniel Same Eyango of Deido, who "possesses at Deido a very well kept house in European style, surrounded by a hedge similar to that which one can see in the best-kept squares of European cities", and had already been given in 1923 and 1924 the first prize for the best-kept African house and surroundings⁶². Dualas frequently let houses to Europeans, e.g. Mingole Ngale to Dr. Thomas of Bonadibong, Akwa⁶³. Many "alienations" of land by Dualas to Europeans were gazetted, apparently including both sales and leases though the imprecise word "alienation" was often used; Dika Diboussi Akwa, probably the former Paramount Chief, in 1926 alienated land at Akwa to the French firm of MM.Lalanne and Frelet⁶⁴. Such land was probably developed by new building before long in most cases.

The government showed concern over town planning. On 23 February 1925 the Commissioner appointed a special commission to examine the disposal of land in the Domaine Privé in Douala and to lay down conditions to be observed

61. Gouellain, op.cit., p. 206; Buell, op.cit., Vol.II,p.284ff.

62. JOC 1 January 1925.

63. JOC 15 October 1927.

64. JOC 15 August 1926.

by purchasers⁶⁵. It is not clear why it was decided to sell a good deal of government property in Douala then; it could have been because the government found it had more than it needed, particularly at Bonanjo, where it had inherited (so it claimed) not just isolated plots and buildings but a whole large area seized by the German government in 1914.

The Swelling Population.

The predictable increase in population in the post-war years is well documented, but there is some doubt about the number of the African Strangers who flocked to Douala then. Official figures gave a total population of about 24,000 in 1920 and nearly 30,000 in 1925⁶⁶. The figure for the influx of Strangers indicated by this is quite likely but it could well be below the real figure, for it later emerged that many Strangers evaded efforts to control their movements. The unreliability of census figures is indicated by their showing a most improbable fall between 1925 and 1930*.

"Influx control" measures included the provisions of the Indigénat, the clauses of the 1922 and 1925 Labour decrees controlling recruitment of Africans by European employers for work outside their home Circonscriptions (which was subject to delivery of a laissez-passer from 1925), and an Arrêté particularly relating to Douala issued on 10 November 1923, requiring all

* See Chapter Four.

65. JOC 15 March 1925.

66. Gouellain, op.cit., p.210.

Africans working for Europeans there to have a livret de travail⁶⁷. There was a particular concern to control immigration to Douala. Checking the spread of infection was given as a reason but the main reason was to stop people moving about as they pleased.

The 1924 Annual Report said, "... a big port like Douala is the refuge of all the adventurers of the territory who wish to escape the discipline and labour of the village to come and taste the bright lights (les plaisirs faciles)"⁶⁸. In fact the usual aim must have been to seek the many jobs becoming available. But the "discipline and labour of the village" included the Indigenat and forced labour, and may have been quite enough to make men want to leave for Douala. It was not too difficult to do so despite the checks. Only in Douala could steps be taken effectively against unauthorised migration from the interior; from 1923⁶⁹, if not earlier, regular police raids to round up immigrants and send them home were to be a normal feature of Douala life. But the immigrant community seems to have been able to hide people quite easily, and thousands of people apparently escaped the checks.

In the early 1920s New-Bell was becoming the main residential area for immigrants, whose new chief-tancies were placed there. Many still lived for long afterwards among the Dualas in Akwa and Deido, renting

67. JOC 1 January 1924.

68. Annual Report 1924, p. 56.

69. Circonscription Annual Report 1923, quoted in Gouellain, op.cit., p.210.

land from them for houses and shops; some were treated as members of Duala families, which helped pay for their funerals, and the assimilation of non-Dualas into the Duala community may have continued well into the Mandate period. Until the 1940s there were Bamilekes' shops in the Duala residential districts⁷⁰. The French moved some Strangers to New-Bell, and as many newcomers started going straight there that district first created for the displaced Bell Dualas became the Strangers' Quarter. The Bell Dualas still lived there in the early 1920s and, after moving to Bali later, retained rights over the New-Bell Land. The French never seem to have contested their rights there in all the land dispute of the Mandate period, even though it meant that the Strangers in New-Bell were nominal tenants of, and therefore to some extent subject to, the Dualas from whom the government wished to separate them. But the government may have thought that they would be at least not so dependent on Dualas there as in Akwa and Deido, and that their new chiefs could more easily control them in New-Bell^{*}. This last hope, indicated by Chazelas' satisfaction that more tax had been collected from Strangers after the creation of their chieftancies⁷¹, was apparently not realised in later years.

The negative desire to reduce the Dualas' power by creating the Stranger chieftancies did not imply

* Also, Gouellain (New-Bell Douala, 1956) suggests that usually no rent was paid to the Dualas for New-Bell land (p.22).

70. M. Doumbe-Mouloungou, Les Dualas, p. 105-7.

71. Circonscription Annual Report 1920, p.6ff., file APA 11873, Cameroon Archives.

affection for the Strangers. Chazelas wrote of them, "One finds...in the floating population all the refuse of the interior Circonscriptions which has yielded to the attraction of the advantages of all sorts which one finds at Douala: no portorage, few impositions, many entertainments, the income – for the women and their companions – from active prostitution, from remunerative work without much constraint, and on occasion the possibility of doing petty trade and the ease of committing thefts of all sorts. All the class of layabouts stealing, fighting, getting arrested, going to prison, and then starting again" ⁷². While the commonly used phrase "floating population" did not always apply to all the Stranger population, Chazelas' highly coloured description seems to have applied to most or all of it. But while a number were unemployed, and thus liable to arrest under the stringent Arrêté of 22 July 1924 on "vagrancy", Chazelas mentioned that job opportunities were among the main attractions in Douala. They were in fact the decisive reason for migration there, and it is clear that European employers recruited immigrants with little or no regard for influx control measures which they criticised⁷³.

The Chiefs of the Strangers became increasingly important junior officials of the government in Douala. At first their appointments were not gazetted, but from

72. Ibid.

73. Chamber of Commerce Bulletin Douala, no. 1, September 1927.

an early date Thomas Umatimbehe was Chief of the Bassas of New-Bell (not to be confused with the local rural Bassas), Peter Gozo chief of the Togolese, and Joseph Paraiso chief of the Dahomeans.

The government itself took workers to Douala, forced labourers, at the same time as it expelled illegal migrants there. This sounds strange but the reason was presumably that illegal immigrants to Douala without jobs would never apply for jobs on government projects in the city, as with the firms they could earn more and run less risk of being sent home; so that workers had to be "recruited"^{*} in the interior for public works projects in Douala. The workers on the harbour dredging in 1923 were "mainly volunteers"⁷⁴, and hundreds of forced labourers were brought for the main harbour extension work begun in 1926.

The Camerounian immigrants to Douala were probably mostly Bassas and Betis, but Boulous, Bamilekes and Bafia people are also recorded. There are references to immigrants of various tribes in many documents, including documents relating to crime and justice as many immigrants ended up in the main prison of Douala, conveniently situated in New-Bell, which from 1925 also had its own police station. On 22 July 1924 there was a riot at New-Bell, after which twelve "Yaounde people"

* A common phrase in official documents, usually if not always a euphemism for forced labour.

74. Annual Report 1923, p. 12.

(Betis) were arrested and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment and banishment (interdiction de séjour) from Douala Circonscription. The report of the case⁷⁵ is interesting as it indicates the work done by immigrants to Douala. Two of those sentenced were male nurses, one a Clerk-Interpreter at the Hospital pharmacy, one a printer for the Public Works Department, one an employee of the SHO, and two tailors. The government employees may have been recruited from their home areas; the others were ordinary immigrants. All did jobs which Dualas also did; Strangers did not always do jobs which Dualas disdained, for there were enough vacancies for Dualas and others in the main city of Cameroun; the government probably preferred to employ local people because it did not need to house them, and it probably brought non-Dualas to Douala for work only because there were not enough Dualas. However, Dualas did have their preferences in employment and this may have increased openings for other Africans; Betis came to be numerous in the Douala police.

The Protestant Mission extended its pastoral concern to New-Bell, which the missionary Maître admired in 1920⁷⁶, and where another missionary in 1922 found 60 Christians in the "Bamoun Village"⁷⁷. Two years later the missionary Nouvelon was in charge of pastoral work among the Boulous of New-Bell, who, he said, were

75. Chef de Circonscription to Commissioner, 7 August 1924, file APA 10404/F, Cameroon Archives.

76. Journal des Missions Evangéliques, second half of 1920, p. 340.

77. JME, second half of 1922, p.37 (letter of M. Vernet, 21 May 1922)

"nearly all people passing through Douala, or workers come from the bush to try to save up some money through working as labourers for the business firms, the Government or the planters"⁷⁸. This is a rare hint at a connection between the migrations to the Dualas' plantations and to Douala itself; such a connection may have been common, for the workers who were said to leave their jobs on the plantations after short periods⁷⁹ could well have gone to seek better jobs in Douala, though they and the Boulous in transit mentioned by the missionary may also have gone on to British Cameroons sometimes.

The Boulous, from the heartland of the US Presbyterian Mission, and the Bamilekes and Bamouns in Douala were probably mostly Protestants when they were Christians at all; so were some Bassas. Otherwise immigrants were often Catholic and New-Bell rapidly became a mainly Catholic area, particularly after the remarkable mass conversion of the Betis in the 1920s and 30s. The Holy Ghost Fathers Mission showed interest in New-Bell from an early stage and noted in 1924 that migrants returning from Douala had taken the Catholic faith to at least one of their home areas, Somo near Ndikinimeki⁸⁰.

The non-Cameroun African immigration to Douala

78. Letter of M. Nouvelon in JME, second half of 1924, p.147.

79. Gouellain, op.cit., p. 209.

80. Le Bulletin des Missions, St. André-les-Bruges, 4th quarter of 1937, p. 11.

is partially recorded in figures of passengers boarding and leaving ships in Douala. Figures collected for the Annual Report in 1923 showed that in that year 1,610 Africans boarded ships in at Douala and 2,091 landed; 1,580 and 1,894, respectively, were traders. About half the travellers were going to and from Tiko in British Cameroons, but many were travelling between Douala and Lagos, and many of the people landing were Nigerians⁸¹. The influx of traders mentioned earlier, temporarily interrupted by the 1920 trade licence measure, included many Nigerians. Most documents mention only "Lagosians" and "Hausas"; the former may well have included other Yorubas, and the latter ^{other} northerners. C.O. Pearce, a trader in Douala in 1928, was probably a true Lagosian. A better known Nigerian trader there, whose name was spelt in various ways but seems to have been Michael Akinshowon, was born in Sierra Leone; there was plenty of movement up and down the West Coast.

There were also Dahomeans among the traders. Later there was to be a well-to-do Dahomean trader in Akwa named Roufaye, and others are mentioned. In the 1920s many non-Camerounian Africans in Douala were applying for timber felling permits; examples include a Thomas Mensah, probably from the Gold Coast or Togo, and an "Occansey", presumably from the Gold Coast, in 1925. In 1924 a rural concession was sought by a Congolese from Loango in Moyen-Congo, Thomas Tchikaya,

81. Annual Report 1923, p. 108; Acting Delegate, Douala, to Commissioner, 15 December 1923, file APA 11511, Cameroon Archives.

who lived in Douala for many decades and was one of the best known immigrants from other colonies there.

But the best known of them all was certainly Goethe Esubiyi George (1897-1976) from Sierra Leone. He went to school in Sierra Leone and Liberia, but ran away, tried to stow away to England and was sent back. After "trying everything" he went to work for John Holt in Gabon. From there he went in 1923 to Douala, where he also worked in the local office of John Holt, under Mr. Teale and Mr. Parsons. In 1930 he left to start his famous photographic studio in Akwa⁸². The British firms in Douala had many clerks from the Gold Coast and Sierra Leone.

The European population of the Circonscription in 1925 was 540, nearly all in Douala itself; about 400 were French⁸³. By then many of the Europeans who were to be famous for long sojourns in Douala had arrived; of these more later.

The Dualas and their Elite.

The African immigration may have made the Doualas already a minority in their city by 1927^{*}, but their social and economic predominance was overwhelming for long after that – they owned most of the town's land (fighting bitterly to regain the part which had been taken from them),

* See Chapter Four.

82. Interview, Goethe George, Douala.

83. Gouellain, op.cit., p. 210.

and were landlords not only of the Strangers but also of many of the Europeans.

The Duala elite will be studied more fully in a later chapter^{*}. It was already recognisable by the 1920s or earlier; a compact group, small in absolute numbers but quite large in relation to the total Duala population of about 15,000, including traditional chiefs and elders, businessmen and big traders, plantation and timber concession owners, officials of the government and the firms, and pastors and other workers of the Missions. Some people came into more than one of those categories; members of each had close relatives by blood or marriage in others. The elite was linked by intermarriage which could often be between people of different "maximal lineages", which the French called Cantons (i.e. the four Paramount Chieftancies). An important wedding of that sort was between Erdmann Njo Eteki of Deido and Rudolf Bell's sister, Yondo, in 1914.

Many families could be chosen as examples of the character of the Duala elite. One good example is the Missipo family of Bell. Thomas Missipo Njembele Mouloby, Kanzlist, planter and trader, and Elder active in the land protest, died about 1921⁸⁴. He left several sons, one of whom, Stephan, was in Germany but inherited a cocoa plantation on the Mungo (5,000 trees). A little over half of the income (7,000 francs p.a.) from this was sent every year to him at Frankfurt in the 1920s,

* See Chapter Five.

84. Interview, Doumbe-Mouloby, Douala.

to finance his studies, by his brother Lazare, a former Clerk-Interpreter who became a transport operator⁸⁵. Another brother, Clitus, became a Customs officer. A sister, Lodta, eventually married the Bonadoo Paramount Chief Théodore Lobe Bell in 1940. Their mother was said in 1927 to be living in a "very fine masonry house". Missipo Mouloby's brother, Rudolph Mouloby, was from the British period an English-speaking clerk for British firms, in British Cameroons and in the 1930s in Douala, Ebolowa, Yaounde and Nkongsamba⁸⁴. The Chef de Circonscription said this family was of "the elite of native society of that tribe which it suits us to encourage and uphold."⁸⁶

The names of many of the elite were published in the gazette in 1921 as subscribers for the fund for the War Memorial eventually built at Bonanjo; Alexandre Douala Manga Bell, Mandessi Bell, Mudute Bell, Ntepe Priso, Betote Akwa, Moume Etia, Eboa Epee, Pastor Kuo Issedou, etc.⁸⁷.

Of the changes which took place after the French occupation in the Duala elite, the most important was that begun when the Dualas, highly critical of French rule though most of them were, sent their children to French schools. From those schools many were in the 1920s joining the African civil service. The rise of

85. Chef de Circonscription to Commissioner, 24 May 1927, file APA 10934/B, Cameroon Archives.

86. Commissioner to Directeur des Affaires Politiques, Colonial Ministry 4 June 1927, same file.

87. JOC 1 December 1921.

the new generation to replace the ones which had become literate in German and Duala was a major change, but it was slow; the Frenchifying of the Duala elite was only becoming pronounced in the 1930s. Yet the older generation hastened it as much as they could; even the most independent German-speaking planter sent his children to French schools.

The first government post-primary school established in French Cameroun was the Ecole Supérieure in Yaounde, established by Arrêté of 25 July 1921 specifically to train African junior staff for the government and the firms; most of those trained there, including many young Dualas, were employed on graduation by the government. The same Arrêté also laid down the system of government primary schools: "village schools" and "Regional Schools", the latter being for more advanced primary studies by children who had already learned some French at the elementary level⁸⁸. After the arrival of several European teachers in 1922-23 these were in charge of the Regional Schools⁸⁹. In late 1923 Douala had six of those schools^{with} 530 pupils, and one village school with 170⁹⁰.

Douala also had a Vocational School, which started in November 1922 but closed three years later⁹¹. In 1927 it was restarted to train railway and Public Works

88. JOC 15 August 1921.

89. Annual Report 1923, p. 21.

90. *ibid.*, p. 28.

91. Annual Report 1925, p. 11.

skilled staff⁹². The school was important for Dualas who provided many skilled staff such as railway technicians and printers; many worked at the government press in Yaounde which from 1923 was printing the Journal Officiel. Another school established in Douala trained many wives and mothers of the Duala elite: the Domestic Science School, Ecole Ménagère, established with another at Yaounde in October 1923, following a circular on 16 August 1923 from Marchand calling for such schools to "train good housewives" ⁹³.

Marchand said another aim of the School was to spread French influence among the Africans through their women, so that the teaching must be all in French. All teaching in all government schools was from the start in French. The government said this was because African languages were useless for modern conditions and none was sufficiently widely spoken, while France wished to advance civilisation and "must conduct her action along the lines of her national genius, which cannot be done without the use of her language" ⁹⁴. The Missions were put under heavy pressure to teach French, and not only from the government, which delayed for some time the strict application of an Arrêté of 1 October 1920 making official recognition of Mission schools conditional on teaching of prescribed courses wholly in French⁹⁵; parents wanted their children prepared for work under the French and would not send them to Mission

92. Annual Report 1927, p. 13.

93. JOC A Sept. 1923.

94. Annual Report 1923, p. 20.

95. Buell, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 345-6.

schools if these did not use French. But the Protestant Mission's small village schools and local Bible and catechism classes used African languages, including Duala in a large area around Douala town. In Douala the French-language primary school of the Protestant Mission had 600 pupils in 1925. A majority of Duala children of primary school age may have been at school by then.

An extensive Arrêté on the African civil service, providing for recruitment of Ecole Supérieure graduates among others, was issued on 31 December 1921. The main categories of junior staff remained as under the series of Arrêtés in 1919, but now some Diplomas and Certificates from the Ecole Supérieure were specifically tied to entry requirements for categories of government staff. A new, higher category was created later: Commis d'Ordre et de Comptabilité.

One of the Cameroun's most famous civil servants, Jacques Kuoh Moukouri of Bonamikengue in Akwa, entered government service as a Clerk at the Finance Office in Yaounde in 1926⁹⁶. The new generation of Duala civil servants, like the old, was to be widely dispersed over the country in the course of duty, with a large number always at Yaounde. The older generation still held the major posts available to Africans — Isaac Moume Etia, in Douala from 1920, became a Principal Clerk-Interpreter from 1 July 1923, and Thomas Barla of Akwa, at the railway head offices in Douala, attained

96. Interview, Jacques Kuoh Moukouri.

the same rank on 1 February 1924. But the new generation advanced rapidly in their footsteps with the increase in government jobs offered.

Their importance to the government did not mean that these clerks could always escape trouble. In 1925 Paul Bonny Eboumbou of Deido, one of the first *Commis d'Ordre et de Comptabilité*, then working at Dschang, was suspended from duty to face a criminal charge; but he evidently cleared himself, for he was appointed to a post in the Commissioner's office on 7 May 1926 and became a leading civil servant. Other junior staff occasionally lost their jobs. But the government recognised their importance and gave them service conditions good by normal African standards — they had housing allowance when posted away from their home towns, and other fringe benefits⁹⁷. A newspaper, La Gazette du Cameroun, was started particularly for them in 1923⁹⁸; many African officials wrote articles in it, usually either on tribal traditions or on events and developments which the government would like them to describe. But the African civil servants were utterly subordinate to the European officials and were never allowed to forget it. This is shown clearly in Kuoh Moukouri's book⁹⁹ which gives a rare and valuable description of the "native clerk", that easily forgotten figure of the colonial era. However, the book also shows

97. JOC 15 November 1925.

98. JOC 1 November 1923.

99. J. Kuoh Moukouri, Les Doigts Noirs, Montreal 1963.

how clerks were of the elite of the African community; they were very much so among the Dualas.

The Chiefs; the Betote Akwa case.

Some District Chiefs held office for most or all of the Mandate period – Tokoto Essome at Bonadoumbe, who reigned until his death in 1942, and Douala Ngongi at Bonadibong were examples. Until the 1930s Paramount Chieftancies changed hands many times. After 1920 there was no change for several years in the Paramount Chieftancy of Bell, nor that of Deido. In Bonaberi, at some unrecorded time before 1926 Mbappe Bwanga was appointed Paramount Chief. But in Akwa this period saw another disturbing event in the traditional kingship, and the most spectacular and controversial of all; it was an event hardly less important for the Dualas than the Baptist Church agitation at the same time.

Ernest Betote Akwa, born on 15 August 1892, was appointed Paramount Chief to replace his brother, Din Akwa, in or about 1922. Din Akwa was sacked by the French, presumably for disloyalty. Betote later recalled that the date was 1922¹⁰⁰, but it was in 1921 that events started which led to the removal of Betote himself. On 8 November 1921 the Chef de Circonscription was told by some chiefs that some people had died in suspicious circumstances in the District of Bonewonda. The deaths were attributed to traditional activities

100. Interview, Ernest Betote Akwa, 1972.

against witchcraft, and on 28 November 1921 some people were condemned to terms of three to 15 years imprisonment.

The Homologation Court, however, ordered a re-trial because the sentences were too light. The case came before the Tribal Court in April 1923. This time Betote Akwa was among the accused, and the court found that he had countenanced a traditional trial, with use of torture, of people suspected of witchcraft, and had attended the torture session himself. He was convicted of causing violence leading to the deaths of Nome Disake, Lotin Boma, Elimbi Ngoye and Ekwa Ekoko. Because of extenuating circumstances he was sentenced to five years imprisonment, a 5,000 francs fine, 50 francs costs and ten years banishment¹⁰¹.

The sentence was upheld by the Homologation Court on 3 January 1925, and Betote Akwa was sent to Maroua in the far north. He was, of course, dismissed; yet another son of "King Akwa", the fourth to hold the Paramount Chieftancy, was appointed to succeed him: Ebongue Akwa.

A few years later there was to be a prolonged and successful campaign for Betote Akwa's reinstatement; and today Dualas, particularly Akwa people, seem convinced that he was innocent of that serious crime. Doubts about his guilt are understandable in view of the nature of the case, in which the witnesses were probably

101. Chef de Circonscription to Commissioner, 16 Sept. 1931, file APA 10187, quoted in A. Owona, "A l'Aube du Nationalisme Camerounais: la curieuse figure de Vincent Ganty," Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outremer, vol. 56 no. 204, 1969. The letter was not found in the Cameroon Archives by the present author.

accomplices; of the fact that the Paramount Chief was brought in only at a re-trial; and of the government's later reinstatement of a ruler condemned for a serious act of homicide such as colonial powers always prided themselves on suppressing. But the government took pains to say that the pardoning and reinstatement of Betote Akwa were acts of pure clemency not implying any doubts about his guilt. And one can assume that the government did believe in his guilt. It had no reason to rig a trial for homicide if it wanted to get rid of a chief; it could simply sack him. Nor is there any reason to suppose that the courts committed a culpable miscarriage of justice. If Betote Akwa was wrongfully convicted this was almost certainly due to "cooking" of evidence by his Akwa enemies.

The Revival of the Churches.

The Protestant and Catholic Missions were not able to resume activity on anything near the pre-1914 level until well into the 1920s. Douala was then the main centre of the work of the Société des Missions Evangéliques Mission, which had its headquarters there. The head of the Mission, chairman of the Missionary Conference which met usually in Douala, was Pastor Allégret until 1922, when he returned to France, and then a Swiss who headed the Mission for 16 years and was one of the best known Protestant missionaries in Douala: Pastor Jean Rusillon. At the time of his arrival one missionary was in charge of Douala city: Pastor Charles Maître, a French Baptist who

had arrived in 1919.

Other early Protestant missionaries included M M. Galland, Vernet, Nouvelon and Baatard. Galland wrote in 1921 that Douala had ten temples, all filled up every Sunday; hymn tunes were the only ones whistled or sung in the streets, and, "Certainly there are at Douala more Christians, proportionately to the number of inhabitants, than in many cities in France" ¹⁰².

The organisation of the new Protestant Mission was described in the previous chapter. Under the ultimate control of the Missionary Conference, Consistories were created for the Evangelical and Baptist communities. These met rarely and daily business was run by the Mission's Steering Committee. All the Evangelicals submitted to the new organisation, and some of the Baptists; with those Baptists who did not there was an open breach after 1920, to be described shortly.

The Evangelical Pastors Ekollo and Kuo Issedou gave the Mission valuable help in Douala, while Modi Din worked as a fervent Evangelist in the Nkongsamba area, in the Bamileke country, and even across the border in British Cameroons, for much of the early 1920s¹⁰³. The Mission took early steps to increase the numbers of their Duala auxiliaries; in 1922 it started a training school for pastors and catechists at Douala, but soon afterwards this was moved to Ndoungue, along the Northern

102. JME, second half of 1921, p. 379.

103. JME, first half of 1921, p. 382; van Slageren, op.cit., p. 170.

Railway near Nkongsamba. At the Bethel temple on 18 April 1926 three new pastors were consecrated: Thomas Manga Elokan of Deido, a famous Duala Baptist pastor; Paul Jocky, a Malimba; and Heinrich Dibue, born at Lobetal near the Sanaga mouth and a lay worker for the German Mission before 1914¹⁰⁴.

The Mission could not pay its school's Monitors well in relation to the cost of living in Douala¹⁰⁵, but it recruited some in spite of the difficulty, and was thus able to continue the school and add a girls' school in 1922¹⁰⁶. The Mission also had its village schools, and Bible and catechism classes, noted earlier. Duala was used not only there but also at the Pastoral school, a clear indication of the importance the Mission attached to that language, which it helped to spread over a large area. For their French-language schools the Mission received government subsidies¹⁰⁷.

The government helped the Protestant Mission in several ways, but many years passed before it and the Catholic Mission eventually obtained use of the properties of the former German Missions. Only in 1926, by a Decree applying to both Cameroun and French Togo where the same problem had arisen¹⁰⁸, was the Mission property problem solved by conferring on the Mission Boards, created earlier, the legal rights of corporate

104. JME, 1926, p. 290; notes on pastors of Douala by Pastor Brutsch.

105. JME, first half of 1923, p. 41-2.

106. *ibid.*, p. 306.

107. Buell, *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 356-7.

108. JOC 1 May 1926.

bodies including property rights.

The Catholic Mission of the Holy Ghost Fathers retained its headquarters for some years at Douala, where Fr. Louis Malessard replaced Fr. Douvry as head of the Mission in 1920. In a long report in 1921 he spoke at length of the problems of his Mission in a city dominated by Protestants, whom he called "Baslers, Anabaptists and Calvinists"; he expressed the strong sectarian feelings which were to continue between the rival missions in Cameroun¹⁰⁹. Not long after this Malessard died in Douala early in 1922. On 3 May 1922 Mgr. François-Xavier Vogt was appointed to succeed him. This Alsatian missionary, who was to become famous in French Cameroun, was on 30 April 1923 appointed Vicar Apostolic with residence at Yaounde. In the same year the Mission opened its petit séminaire at Akono, near Yaounde. This and the grand séminaire at Mvolye outside Yaounde were later to train many Camerounian priests, the first being ordained in 1935.

In late 1926 Vogt said Douala had nearly 4,000 Catholics. Most of these were Strangers but there were some Catholic Dualas. The Catholic Mission in Douala had to respond to the need for education, for both boys and girls¹¹⁰, but it did not do too well; its examination results were often poor and many Catholic parents, despite

109. Letter of Père Malessard, Douala, 21 October 1921, in Bulletin de la Congrégation du Saint-Esprit, 1921-22, pp.629-33.

110. Malessard to Prefect of Propaganda, Douala 1 December 1921, Holy Ghost Fathers Archives, 1925-31 documents file, Paris.

the Church's disapproval, sent their children to government schools.

Bonaberi, as already noted, was under the other Catholic Mission of the Sacred Heart Fathers, which was to open its church there much later, in 1938. At that time the old Paramount Chief Mbappe Bwanga became a Catholic, probably the first Duala Paramount Chief ever to do so, though Ludwig Mpondo Akwa would have been another had he lived.

Pastor Lotin Same and the Independent Baptists.

A major event in Douala's history was the creation of the independent Native Baptist Church. It emerged into separate existence in the early 1920s, when it became the focus of powerful nationalistic feelings for some time. As has been indicated it is difficult to say when the NBC began. It may well have existed continuously from about 1906, with the talks with the French missionaries in 1917 clearly failing to bring Dibundu and many of his followers under the effective direction of the new Mission. What happened in 1920-21 was probably not a secession but only the confirmation of the effective separation of some Baptists from the missionary organisation.

The Mission's insistence on close control of the churches by the expatriate missionaries was disliked by both Evangelicals and Baptists. The lay elders of the Evangelical churches in Douala wrote in a protest on 3 June 1920 that the missionaries acted "like governors" ¹¹¹;

111. van Slageren, op.cit., p. 150.

there were several disputes, and even in his enthusiastic evangelisation of interior peoples Modi Din had trouble with the missionaries, who criticised his approach¹¹². For all Baptists the congregation is what matters, and the question of missionary control was particularly vital for the Duala Baptists.

On 14 October 1920 a big meeting of Duala Baptists at New-Bell agreed on the formal creation of an independent Baptist Church. This and a subsequent meeting on 5 February 1921 set the NBC on its course¹¹³. According to a sketchy but important study by Léopold Moume Etia the second meeting was held to deal with disagreements following the first. Then, after the two meetings, three Baptist pastors were approached by the Independents to see if they would work with a separatist Church. The leaders who approached them were apparently mainly laymen, but they probably included also Yoshua Dibundu and his elder son Alfred Tongo Dibundu. The latter's history is slightly obscure but it seems that after education at the Colwyn Bay African Institute in Wales he became a pastor before 1920, when he was unfrocked by the Mission for unrecorded reasons¹¹⁴. While no documents say so it is possible that the younger Dibundu, then aged about 45 and said by Chazelas to be an "adviser" to the Paramount Chief of Akwa¹¹⁵, took a lead in the Independent Church movement after the

112. *ibid.*, p. 186ff.

113. L. Moume Etia, "Lotin Same et l'Eglise Baptiste Camerounaise", MS first published in La Presse du Cameroun, Douala, 12 Nov. and 9 Dec. 1971.

114. *ibid.*, and Notes on pastors by Pastor Brutsch.

115. Douala Circonscription Annual Report 1920, p.5-6; file APA 11873, Cameroon Archives.

disciplinary action against him (unless he was actually disciplined for such activity). Anyway, he became a candidate for leadership of the Native Baptist Church. But before elections were held for that leadership the Independents had approached the other three pastors: Albert Tobbo Deido, Joseph Ngando Nsangue and Adolf Lotin Same. All agreed to join initially¹¹⁶.

On 7 May 1921 a meeting was held at the Bethel Church to elect a Director of the NBC. The fact that the Independents met at the historic central church was probably meant to be symbolic, but it did not involve defiance of the Mission as the church had apparently been left to the Independents about 15 years before; the powers of the Mission over use of religious buildings at that particular time are also unclear. There were two candidates for the Directorship, Tongo Dibundu and Lotin Same. Bloc votes were cast by parish, and Lotin Same was elected after winning the votes of New-Bell, Deido, Dikolo and Bonewonda parishes, while Boneyike, Bonamwang, Jebale and Bethel parish itself voted for Dibundu. A catechist was accused of trying to rig the election in favour of Lotin Same, but nonetheless Adolf Lotin Same was elected. Following this a general assembly was called.

Before the assembly met on May 17, old Pastor Yoshua Dibundu died on 12 May 1921¹¹⁷. He had lived to see confirmation of the independent church of which he was the real founder.

116. Moume Etia, op.cit.

117. Notes by Pastor Brutsch.

The assembly conferred full powers on Lotin Same, who as leader of the NBC was to become one of the most famous figures in Duala history. But there were disagreements at the assembly and afterwards. According to Albert Mpondo Dika's memorial notice on Lotin Same (his fellow Akwa man and friend), "The beginning was joyful, a general enthusiasm filled the population. But that joy was no more than a straw fire, for envy, one of Satan's devices, was to play its part. Quickly some of the chiefs of the communities disavowed their pledges, followed by some evangelists and church elders to return to union with the missionaries they had just left. Tale-bearers were active at meetings, lying reports and slander became normal everywhere" ¹¹⁸. The Mission was naturally alarmed at the widespread following of the new church and Maître, as local head of the Mission in Douala and a Baptist, was probably particularly active against it. He is said to have worked on Ngando Nsangué ¹¹⁶, who refused to sign the document giving full powers to Lotin Same and later in 1921 had his consecration – queried because it had been at the hands of Tobbo Deido, already then an Independent – confirmed by Allégret, probably as a prompt reward for his return to the Mission's fold, in which he remained from then on. Prominent laymen who had joined the movement at the outset soon left.

On 24 May 1922, at a meeting at the Ebenezer Dikolo Church, Tobbo Eyoun decided to leave the NBC and return to

118. A. Mpondo Dika, A la mémoire d'Adolf Lotin Same, unpublished MS, Douala 1970.

the Mission. In the same year he went blind and had to retire from the ministry. Tongo Dibundu seems to have played no important part in the history of the NBC after 1921. That left Lotin Same as the only pastor of the new church at first. But on 8 February 1922 the church consecrated six deacons, and despite the defections its popular support grew¹¹⁶.

The Popular Movement behind the NBC.

Lotin Same was famous as a writer of hymns in Duala, and Rusillon recalls¹¹⁹ that a frequent theme in his hymns was the Exodus, while a "hope of liberation" underlay the whole movement. The movement seems to have been a fervent popular one with a strong Protestant Christian element, strikingly like Black American movements in which the Baptist creed has been similarly prominent; Lotin Same's hymns have been specifically compared with negro spirituals¹¹⁶. A longing for spiritual and other freedom lay behind the rise of the NBC, and Dualas widely supported it as part of a general dissatisfaction with French rule. There was thus an upsurge of anti-European feeling in 1920-23, reaching a peak after the action taken against Lotin Same in 1922.

It is far from clear how many Protestant mission churches were used initially by the NBC. Galland simply

119. Interview, Pastor Jean Rusillon, Geneva 1973.

mentioned that there were some in 1921¹²⁰. There and at other meeting places the Independents joined in hymns, prayers and sermons, with Lotin Same composing many of the hymns. His Christian fervour was acknowledged by the missionaries with whom he clashed and he never wholly broke off contact with them during the dispute¹¹⁹.

In 1920 the Chef of Circonscription, Chazelas, was already referring in his Annual Report to the "Native Church", saying it called for "Africa for the Africans". He noted, "It is normal to preach on themes taken from Scripture, apparently innocent, but in which the initiated can recognise the French administration in the Roman praetor who sends Christians to the wild beasts, in the Beast of the Apocalypse, or in Nebuchadnezzar or King Herod"¹¹⁵. The similar report for 1921 also linked the NBC with political anti-colonialism: "The Black Church's watered-down Christianity makes it easier to recruit followers, whom it attracts also by the idea of African liberation and the dreams of an independent Duala republic... on the model of that of Monrovia"¹²¹. Another report that year said Dualas' opposition to the abolition of the chiefs' courts and to some other measures was wholly due to the influence of the "Native Church", whose principles "must obviously suit the natives as it turns their own desires into rules to follow for the greater glory of the Lord"¹²². Among

120. JME, second half of 1921, p. 379.

121. Quoted in Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p. 201.

122. *ibid.*, p. 202.

the other measures said to be opposed by the Dualas was the separation of the town from the Circonscription for some purposes; presumably they saw this as another measure to separate them from other tribes under their influence. The NBC emerged at the very time of the measures aimed at such separation, and of the disappointment to the protest leaders following Prince Alexandre's return, the action against some of the leaders, the Slump and the prohibitive rise in trade licence fees. The officials just quoted were surely right to link protests at such things with the NBC. It cannot be seen exactly as the inspirer of protests, but as a new channel for expression of response to many recent provocations.

But the anti-French sentiments were shared by Dualas who did not join the NBC or even opposed it, and these were many. According to Mpondo Dika the reaction against the movement came from three sources. There were some Africans, whom this ardent admirer of Lotin Same calls "imbeciles, frauds and freaks, headed by certain families and personalities nourished with the hope of holding the religious ministry as their traditional heritage, and claiming to be the sole candidates for all positions carrying popularity"; the missionaries; and the colonial government¹¹⁸. It is not clear which Dualas are meant in this diatribe; many did not join the NBC, not all for the base motives suggested, though many who did not join sympathised with Lotin Same against the French.

On 19 March 1922 the Mission suspended Lotin Same from his pastoral functions and the decision was placarded in the streets of Douala. Two reasons were given: his making of money from trade, plantations and a sawmill, leading to divided interest; and his leadership of the Independents. The Mission did not approve of pastors joining in the normal economic activities of the Duala elite, though they did so and Pastor Kuo Issedou became rich from his plantations. The main count against Lotin Same was not that, but that he "has separated himself from the Mission, which he promised to serve, to found an association of which he is the chief, independent of the Mission, and has not hesitated, to gain adherents, to mix political questions (of race and clan) with the religious question" ¹²³. He was also condemned for baptising polygamists and even appointing them as church elders, and for defending polygamy publicly. The decision to suspend him for all these reasons was signed by Allégret and the missionaries Galland, Dieterlé, Baertschi, Scheibler, Nicod and Maître. Later in 1922 Allégret left; his successor, Rusillon, says he disapproved of the measure against Lotin Same ¹¹⁹. But it was in accordance with normal missionary attitudes at the time.

Like other African Independent Church leaders Lotin Same wished at first to work within the Mission Church, an idea particularly understandable among

123. Quoted in van Slageren, op.cit., p. 192.

Baptists who normally have no hierarchy and practice wide congregational autonomy. Thus his followers, who might have been expected to welcome a breach with the Mission, were in fact enraged at what they saw as an authoritarian European action. The nationalist feelings surrounding Lotin Same were aroused to a peak. The anti-French mood was described a few years later, after his visit to Cameroun, by the American researcher, R. L. Buell:

"In some cases battles arose in the following months over the possession of certain church buildings in Douala. Meanwhile, the Same movement took a more serious political turn. An American negro sailor, representing the Garvey movement, came to Douala in May, 1921, and talked to many leaders in the church. At a public meeting, this sailor told the natives that Garvey's Black Star Line would help the blacks fight the whites. He urged a boycott on European goods. At this meeting, Lotin Same read letters which he had written to the French parliament, the American Government, the Federation of Negro Churches in America, and the London Baptist Missionary Society asking them to support the liberation of the Native Church" ¹²⁴.

There is more about the Garveyite seaman in the Archives, but it suggests that Buell was wrong about the date of his visit, and does not support the rest of his report, though this may well be correct even so as

124. Buell, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 304.

details of discussions might have been concealed from the French. By this time the Colonial Ministry was sending its monthly Circulars on revolutionary activity relating to the colonies to all French governors. The Circular of 15 September 1923 mentioned that John Smith, calling himself a West Coast African (not a Black American) and aged 24, arrived in early May 1923, saying he had come to establish a branch of the Black Star Line. He announced a typical Garveyite scheme for a big African-run firm to oppose European business. Later he went to British Cameroons, where he served a three-month gaol sentence¹²⁵.

Little is known about the battles over Church possession. Presumably the Independents were shut out of churches which they had been using, perhaps following the creation of Mission Boards with rights of use of property in 1922.* They could not, of course, be suppressed in this way, and Buell recorded that, "During 1922-3, the whole town of Douala seethed with this religious 'revolt', in which natives paraded up and down singing anti-European hymns" ¹²⁶. Buell quoted one such hymn (in French, but presumably translated from Duala). He said the NBC claimed credit for Allégret's departure, imagining that he had been removed by the League of Nations¹²⁶. All this is clear enough; so is the excited state of feeling generally in Douala at the time. Less clear is what actually happened to the new Church.

125. Circular on Revolutionary Activity, Ministry to Governors, Paris, 15 Sept. 1923, file APA 11378, Cameroon Archives.

126. Buell, loc.cit., and n.

* In 1926 the Mission was using the Bethel church.

Dualas vaguely recall suppression or persecution of some sort, but it seems there was nothing like this beyond exclusion from churches, which the government would have enforced if necessary to back up the Mission's rights. Probably the government could have banned the NBC, as stringent laws on associations among Africans were in force and the pledge to respect religious freedom was qualified; but there is no evidence that it did so. There were formalities for application for approval of a religious group, but the documents do not mention any application by the NBC at this time, nor any punishment for failing to make one. Lotin Same seems to have had his movements restricted¹²⁷, but he was not arrested at this time, and there is no record in documents of the ban on preaching mentioned by Buell¹²⁸.

In 1923 the Mission held talks with Lotin Same. It is difficult to decipher what was discussed and eventually agreed. The Mission seems to have sought to bring all the Independents under its control, but a loose control with many concessions. Buell says an agreement was actually reached on 1 May 1923 under which the Independents "presumably returned to the fold of the United Church", with some concessions to them on the issue of parish finances, but on condition of submission to an investigation which would lead to exclusion from full communion of those not "living according to

127. Moume Etia, op.cit.

128. Buell, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 305.

Christian standards". Later, however, Lotin Same and others went back on the agreement and re-formed the NBC¹²⁸.

The Mission's journal recorded a "rapprochement between the Native Baptists and the Mission" in the second half of 1923¹²⁹, but added, "there are always turbulent and difficult elements, towards whom one cannot show too much prudence and firmness, while being inspired by the greatest Christian charity." It seems that some of the Independents accepted a compromise but not all. Rusillon recalled later that at first Lotin Same refused to accept it but later agreed on terms which left him in control of his organisation¹³⁰. He was certainly not readmitted to pastoral functions under the Mission. All that is certain is that the NBC existed as a recognisable independent entity from 1921, without a break and, Maître recalled later, without any effective restrictions¹³¹.

Other religious movements.

In 1925 the Chef de Circonscription said it had been wrong to treat the NBC as a political rather than a religious movement¹³². This was an unusual individual view. The NBC itself did not distinguish its political

129. JME, second half of 1923, p. 94-5.

130. Interview, Pastor Rusillon.

131. Interview, Pastor Charles Maître, Paris 1973.

132. Circonscription Annual Report for last quarter of 1925, quoted in Gouellain, op.cit., p. 211.

and religious aspirations; nor, usually, did the French, who saw religious dissent as part of the Dualas' general nationalism. They could not suppress such a widespread movement as that of the NBC without repressive action on a scale that could not be hidden in Douala. But they did prevent, though not usually by severe measures, other expressions of religious dissent. A Bonadoo father and son, Petrus and Arthur Epanya, who had travelled to Nigeria and other parts of West Africa wrote in turn from various places outside Cameroun to ask for permission to start new churches at home; but repeated requests for authorisation were refused¹³³.

A sect, called the Holy Ghost Sect, of a sort unusual if not unique in the Dualas' history grew up at the time of the rise of the NBC, with which, however, it had nothing in common. The Chef de Circonscription's report on the "Mystical Holy Ghost Sect" after its discovery by the French in 1921 is almost the only source of information on it, but it is a particularly detailed and interesting report¹³⁴. It shows that the sect was a quasi-Christian one formed by Mission-trained Dualas, believing in direct contact with the Holy Ghost and in

133. Carde to P. Epanya, 22 May 1919, file APA 10547/A, Cameroon Archives; P. Epanya to Commissioner, 9 Nov. 1920, same file; Chef de Circonscription, Douala to Commissioner, 26 Sept. 1925, file APA 10227, Cameroon Archives; Douala Central Police Commissioner to Chef de Circonscription, 28 June 1928, file APA 10547/A. A.R.C. de Panya (sic) to Commissioner, Lagos 15 Sept. 1924; Marchand to Epanya, 28 Oct. 1924; Epanya to Marchand, 4 Dec. 1924; Acting Commissioner to Epanya, 15 Feb. 1925; all in file APA 10547/C, Cameroon Archives.

134. Chef de Circonscription's report on Holy Ghost Sect, 15 Sept. 1921, file APA 10547/B, Cameroon Archives.

possession as a sign of inspiration. Its followers had trances and states of exaltation apparently aided by smoking of hemp. Some Dualas including the chiefs of Bonatⁿone and Bonatene, in Deido, complained about them, after which the Chef de Circonscription — Chazelas — called two alleged leaders of the sect, Peter Musio and Ndoki, to his office. "They have shining eyes, dilated pupils, they hold their hands crossed in an attitude of devotion", he recorded. They and other leaders of the sect were arrested and investigations begun, followed by a trial.

It turned out that the interpreter of the Commissioner of Police was a member of the sect; so were some business employees and a former Kanzlist, Toubé Eyoum. When questioned the sect members seemed "inspired"; former Catholics claimed to have visions like those of saints whose lives had been taught to them. The few Duala Catholics seem to have influenced the sect considerably — its very name suggests this, and Musio was an ex-Catholic — but there were ex-Protestants in it also. The main inspirer, Chazelas reported, was a madman who had "dangerous fits" and been locked up many times. This was Victor Manga Bell, a brother of Rudolf and Richard Bell. His membership alone must have made the case a matter of great interest among the Dualas, even if few of them approved its unconventional practices. These consisted mainly of daily meetings at Musio's house, where the Holy Ghost was said to descend upon those present and Musio himself was usually **possessed**: "The possessed weeps, shouts, runs, strips naked, prostrates

himself; all the others imitate him". Music claimed to have brought some medicine from a soldier, and Chazelas thought it might have been cannabis; the sect's devotees smoked hemp and drank palm wine. Women attended the meetings and, "It is probable that scenes of debauchery occur during crises where the Holy Ghost demands a return to the simple dress of the first man."

Chazelas, clearly a cultured colonial official, noted, "All this is not new. Analogous things happened in the multiple Gnostic sects which were formed in the 2nd and 3rd centuries at Alexandria and in the East." The phenomenon of such movements is indeed universal, but it is hard to guess why it occurred at Douala at that time. It was not typical of the Dualas and after the arrest of the leaders in 1921 to have disappeared quickly, at least until the 1940s when there seems to have been a similar sect there and at Edea. Possibly the sect was a response to social and economic stress, or to the rapid conversion to Christianity, but such things are hard to assess. Fourteen members were sentenced to various prison terms on 8 September 1922¹³⁵. They did not include all the leaders named by Chazelas; some may have been tried and sentenced separately.

135. Chef de Circonscription to Commissioner, 9 Sept. 1922; Commissioner to Chef de Circonscription, 15 Sept. 1922; file APA 10404/F, Cameroon Archives.

Opposition, Protests and "Subversion".

In a comment on the NBC in 1925 the Chef de Circonscription (Chazelas again) said anti-colonialism among the Dualas was not peculiar to the NBC but was general¹³². This was certainly true. The agitation about the Baptist Church was just one expression of a state of feeling also shown in repeated written protests and petitions.

In 1921 the Chef de Circonscription received protests at Prestations, trade licence fees, and the loss of chiefs' power, and a group of pastors wrote a petition saying the French in Douala were worse than the British, the Germans or the Americans¹³⁶. These may have been the Baptist pastors who all initially joined the NBC, and the odd reference to the Americans may have been inspired by incomplete knowledge of Liberia or of Woodrow Wilson's role in starting the League of Nations. After this, on 6 November 1921 Carde published a notice saying that taxation and Prestation labour had been enforced under the Germans and were justified while there had been corruption in the chiefs' courts; he warned the people of Douala not to fall into "the traps into which some of the enlightened wish, for personal profit, to see them fall"¹³⁶.

In 1923 a certain "Banuso Kitoliche" of Douala wrote directly to the Minister of the Colonies, accusing the government in Cameroun of many misdeeds. The

136. Buell, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 359-60.

Commissioner replied, rejecting all the charges on the basis of a detailed letter from the Delegate¹³⁷.

The protest note in 1924 began "La population de Douala à Monsieur ^u le Commissaire..."but was signed "Ncongo Mbende." It accused the French of being "more wicked than the Germans"; referring to the case of Betote Akwa, it said the Paramount Chief had done no more than "les policiers (sic) du gouvernement" did in Douala. There were other, detailed allegations of police brutality¹³⁸.

When the Delegate Fourcade left his post later an official testimonial praised him for tact, intelligence and political sense¹³⁹. This was certainly a reference to his handling of political protests. The government seemed fairly satisfied with its handling of them, for in the Annual Report for 1923 it said some Dualas who had "shown themselves particularly inclined to reject authority" and called for independence had now seen that this was useless¹⁴⁰. By then the Baptist Church agitation was probably subsiding, perhaps because the economic boom was well under way. But protests like the ones just mentioned went on. They were written in various languages; there was one in Pidgin in 1924, one in Duala in 1925¹⁴¹. The latter made an allegation often

137. Banuso Kitoliche to Minister, Douala 10 Feb.1923; Delegate to Commissioner, Douala 9 July 1923; Commissioner to Minister, 23 July 1923; Box Cameroun AP II 32, Archives SOM, Paris.

138. Letter "Ncongo Mbende" to Commissioner, 20 Nov. 1924; Douala Police Commissioner to Delegate, 16 Dec.1924; Delegate to Marchand, 5 March 1925; file APA 11875/A, Cameroon Archives.

139. JOC 1 June 1925.

140. Annual Report 1923, p. 140.

141. Unsigned letter, Douala, 6 June 1924; Mudii ma Dualla letter received by government 26 Feb.1925; file APA 10726/B, Cameroon Archives.

to be repeated in later years, of encroachment by Europeans on Dualas' plantations. This may not have happened often then, but it did later, with serious effects on the plantations. In the 1920s there were common, indeed persistent allegations of police brutality. There is no need to doubt that they were well founded; the police were few, they had innumerable petty rules and regulations to enforce, and their opportunities to harass and blackmail people were endless.

The recurring problem of Africans being expected to bow or salute to Europeans in the street was raised again in 1922 by the case of a Gabonese French citizen in Douala who was somewhat roughly handled when arrested for not doing so. He was backed by a petition of the Gabonese of Douala and also appealed to the Ligue des Droits de l'Homme in Paris, which corresponded with Carde¹⁴². Such intervention cannot have been welcome to the government at a time of widespread anti-colonial protest in Africa generally.

Dualas were probably well informed about all that activity: the limited nationalistic activity in Gabon; the much greater upsurge in Dahomey, the main elite African centre in French West Africa outside Senegal; the free political activity of the Four Communes of Senegal; nationalist politics in Lagos,

142. Chef de Circonscription to Commissioner, 11 May 1922; Gabonese Community in Douala to Commissioner, 12 Jan. 1922; Chairman of Ligue Française pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme to Commissioner, Paris 10 June 1922; Commissioner to Chairman of Ligue...Yaounde 28 June 1922, file APA 11874 and 11878/A, Cameroon Archives.

and the creation of the National Congress of British West Africa, Dualas, like other West Africans, travelled widely along the coast, and colonial authorities must have been aware of how quickly news of dissidence in one colony would reach others. The Colonial Ministry, in the circulars on anti-colonial activity already mentioned, informed each Governor of events elsewhere which might interest or influence Africans in his colony. Besides events in Africa such as the Dahomey riots of 1923 and the Kimbanguist movement in the Belgian Congo in 1921, they dealt with radical Black and African anti-colonial movements started in Paris after 1924; the Ligue Universelle de Défense de la Race Noire, then the Comité de la Défense de la Race Nègre, then the Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre¹⁴³.

Little contact between these movements and French Cameroun was noted in the early 1920s. But in 1922 Laurent Anchouey, an early Gabonese nationalist, gave a message to an African friend in France to take to "Manga Bell"; but the friend "did not carry out the commission, distrusting that Camerounian"¹⁴⁴. This intriguing reference may well be to Alexandre Douala Manga Bell, a likely person for anti-colonial activists to try to contact and later to distrust.

143. J. Ayo Langley, Pan-Africanism and Nationalism in West Africa, 1973; ch. VII.

144. Circular on Revolutionary activity, 15 Dec. 1922, file APA 10430, Cameroon Archives.

The activities in West Africa inspired by Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association led to the visit of John Smith already mentioned and an odd episode in Douala which may or may not have resulted from that visit: the brief formation of a Garvey-inspired group called "Jeune Afrique".

The source of information on this is, curiously, the Annual Report to the League of Nations for 1924¹⁴⁵. It mentioned "Jeune Afrique" as a small group of young évolués in Douala following Pan-African ideas and those of Garvey; it had very little influence, but some of its aims were practicable. No more is heard of this group. The government can hardly have liked to see a movement inspired by Garvey among the Dualas, but it may have been correct in thinking that it was opposed by the older Dualas and of no importance. The Dualas had no need of Garveyite or other imported ideas to reinforce their indigenous anti-colonialism, in which the older generation was in the lead; young men inspired by ideas from outside had nothing new to propose to them.

However, the French authorities watched closely the foreign Africans landing there, fearing subversive influences. But their main fear was not of left-wingers and Garveyites, but of the Germans, who were suspected of being behind Duala unrest throughout the Mandate period.

The French were wary of Dualas still in Germany or returning for visits there, though not of all. Mackembe

145. Annual Report 1924, p. 109.

Mukuri, who had taught at the Colonial Institute in Hamburg before 1914, was allowed to return to Douala despite suspected Germanophilia, but left again later and was suspected of contacting the "xenophobic group in Douala" from abroad¹⁴⁶. Dibobe was allowed to return in 1921¹⁴⁷ but seems to have stopped for a time in Liberia before returning to Douala.

Dualas did not need any German to tell them to oppose French rule, and the idea that many of them were wanting the Germans back may well have been baseless. But the generation leading the protests was German-educated and German-speaking, and this may have made them even more critical of the French than they had been of the Germans before 1914. But the French belief that opposition was due in part to Dualas' European but not French cultural development is doubtful. It is certainly unlikely that more than a handful of Dualas were actively working to restore a colonial regime of which their people had bad memories, at a time when many others wanted independence. But a handful may have done this or, more probably, thought they could obtain German help — which may have been offered covertly to the Dualas in Germany — for their nationalist cause. That was one version of the normal French Germanophobia in Douala. Thomas Manga Akwa, a cousin of Betote Akwa, travelled many times between

146. French Ambassador, Berlin, to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 24 May 1921; Commissioner to Minister of Colonies, 29 July 1922, Box Cameroun AP II 29 and 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

147. Minister of Foreign Affairs to Minister of Colonies, Paris 23 March 1921, same Box.

Douala and Germany and may have been an activist lending support to French suspicions; he was apparently suspected of left-wing activity in the early 1920s¹⁴⁸ and in 1930 was to be forbidden to land at Douala, an unusual step.

Some Dualas who stayed in Germany were to be politically active in later years. Stephan Dualla Missipo was apparently not thought to be so when he applied from Frankfurt, where he was studying medicine, for a job at home in 1927¹⁴⁹; the request was considered sympathetically, but he stayed in Germany and qualified there as the first Camerounian doctor.

The French were suspicious of Germans in Spanish Guinea¹⁵⁰, but their concern was much increased when Germans returned in large numbers to British Cameroons. The Germans who had owned the plantations around Mount Cameroon were allowed by the British to buy them back at the auction in 1924. Thus, by 1925, most of the plantations were working again under their former owners. There were hundreds of Germans in the area between Buea and Victoria, where they had locally almost as much influence as before 1914, being much more numerous than the British. In that area people talk of the "German time" as lasting until 1939. They were very near Douala and access was very easy. Soon people were leaving French Cameroun to work on the Germans' plantations. They included

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148. Letter ^{of} Chazelas, Sept. 1925, file APA 10726/B, Cameroon Archives.
149. Marchand to Director of Political Affairs at Colonies Ministry, 4 June 1927; letter from Dualla Missipo, 10 Jan. 1927; Chef de Circonscription to Commissioner, 24 May 1927; file APA 10934/B, Cameroon Archives.
150. e.g. Marchand to Minister, 1 Dec. 1924, file APA 10017, Cameroon Archives.

some Dualas, and for the French the source of the feared German infection was now next door¹⁵¹.

The Movement for Restoration of Joss.

Despite the setback in 1920 the hopes for independence or self-government seem to have remained until about 1924, being expressed, as many French documents testify, in the movement in support of the NBC. After this a temporary decline in the more advanced anti-colonial agitation is noticeable. It was only relative; the constant French fear of German or other subversion showed an awareness of the Dualas' continued hostility. But Dualas now turned to protests at specific actions of their rulers: the behaviour of the police and other topics of their petitions, and, most resented of all, the government's retention of the Joss plateau seized in 1914.

After the Humblot mission of 1919-20 neither the Bells nor the government altered their positions on the land case. But the French, while determined to keep and use the elegant Joss Plateau, cared less about Bali. There may have been some difference in the legal position of the two areas, as Dualas later argued, because of less complete execution in 1914 of the German expropriation measures — which were the basis of the claimed French title — in Bali. This is not certain, and the French claimed to have inherited ownership of Bali also, but

151. See numerous Menées Allemandes and related files in Cameroon Archives, e.g. APA 10222, 10227.

they did not care much about the use of the land there; by the early 1920s Bonadoo Dualas were moving from New-Bell to Bali¹⁵². Albert Bebe Bell, the teacher and cousin of Richard Bell, was one of the first to go there, in 1923¹⁵³. But the expropriated people continued to demand the restoration of all the seized land.

In 1922 the Lands Department produced a full report on the expropriations of 1914. It upheld the French view that the German action had been legal¹⁵⁴. Refusing to budge from that position, the French for years thought of pacifying the Bonadoo with more compensation. After at first considering a cash payment, they then thought of giving them most of Bali instead. This could not satisfy the Bonadoo, who held that Bali was theirs anyway and so could not be given to them, and wanted Joss restored to them as of right, with Bali.

On 16 April 1924 a letter from "the people of Bonanjo-New-Bell, owners of land at Bonanjo-Douala," asked for the return of all the land "which the Germans had not been able to take effectively through expropriation". A week later another letter protested at the sale of four plots of land by the Custodian of Enemy Property to the Banque Française de l'Afrique and other private establishments¹⁵⁵. The circumstances of that sale are obscure; clearly it was former German property,

152. Interview, Doumbe-Mouloby, Douala.

153. Interview, Albert Mod'a Bebe Bell.

154. Gouellain, op.cit., p. 224.

155. ibid., p. 223.

and presumably former Duala property expropriated by the Germans before their expulsion, but the ordinary Bonanjo expropriated area was treated as Domaine land automatically inherited by the French, so that sales of it would be ordinary sales of Domaine land, separate from the auctions of former private German property by the Custodian. Perhaps it was the first sale of Domaine land in the expropriated area, and thus a new assertion of the French government title to that area.

In 1925 the government started planning the layout of Douala, as noted earlier. A planning committee left New-Bell out of consideration and made plans for the traditional Duala areas; it envisaged a "European zone" all the way along the left bank from Bonanjo to Deido, an adjacent zone where Africans could live but would have to build solid houses, and another zone further inland without building restrictions¹⁵⁶. It was to some extent a revival of the German plan, and although it envisaged no new expropriations it presupposed the government's possession of Bonanjo. Following the plan Domaine plots were sold on condition of development by purchasers in line with the town plan.

Soon afterwards the Bonadoo brought a legal action which amounted to a challenge to the government's right to use the expropriated land; Chazelas said it concerned the erection of two new government buildings¹⁵⁷. At the

156. *ibid.*, p. 225, quoting Marchand to Chef de Circonscription, 6 June 1925.

157. Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p. 225-6, quoting Chef de Circonscription to Marchand, 31 Oct. 1925.

same time Paramount Chief Richard Bell, who was to take the lead in his people's land agitation, brought ^(an) action for the annulment of two of the German expropriation ordinances of 1913, relating to a plot then owned by his brother Rudolf and leased to the Deutsch West-Afrikanische Gesellschaft. The statement of the case, dated 6 November 1925, made a claim which the Bonadoo were to make insistently: that the Germans themselves had not carried out the full legal requirements for making the expropriation ordinances definitive (therefore, that the land had never become German government property). In this case Richard Bell said the continued payment of rent to his brother in 1913-14, and the inclusion of the property in his will, proved that the expropriation had been of no legal effect¹⁵⁸. The wording of the will does not seem to support this argument¹⁵⁹. No court, it seems, considered this case or any other action concerning the expropriated land in 1925-6, when the government tried to settle the matter "out of court".

Talks between the Government and the Bells.

Later the Bonadoo said a letter sent by Richard Bell and Johannes Njembele Ekwe (a leading collaborator of Richard, as he had been of Rudolf, in the land case) to Marchand on 20 October 1925 had not been answered¹⁵⁹.

158. Statement in René Douala Manga Bell papers, Douala.

159. Memorandum to Me. Jean-Louis in Lobe Bell land case, 30 July 1930, in Box Cameroun AP 615, file I, Archives SOM, Paris. See Chapter 4 on this document. 7

But after that letter and the Paramount Chief's lawsuit of 6 November Marchand wrote to Chazelas on 12 November 1925, setting out the government's position. After this, it seems, Chazelas held talks with the Bell leaders to explain that position, which was that the town plan would go ahead, and the disposal of German property would be finished as quickly as possible, but that there would be no expropriation in Akwa or Deido and the expropriated Bonadoo property owners would be allowed to live in Bali and given ex-gratia payments for building of houses there¹⁶⁰.

This offer, spelled out in a letter from the Commissioner on 19 December,¹⁶¹ was at first no more acceptable to the Bells than the offer of money compensation, which was apparently still being discussed seriously by at least one Duala in 1926; he was, however, referred to as "A.B."¹⁶², and almost certainly he was Alexandre Bell, once more breaking his people's solidarity. Most of the people wanted simple restoration of all the land. The government's offer was made less attractive still when Marchand said on a visit to Douala in 1926 that the ex-gratia payments would not be paid in cash, only credited to house building costs¹⁶³.

160. Marchand to Chazelas, 12 Nov. 1925, quoted in Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p. 226.

161. Chef de Mission d'Inspection to Minister, Yaounde 6 March 1927, Box Cameroun, AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris.

162. Chef de Circonscription to Commissioner, 28 Jan. 1926; Commissioner to Chef de Circonscription, 3 Feb. 1926; Minister to Commissioner, 11 Aug. 1926; quoted Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p. 227.

163. Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p. 226.

As Chef de Circonscription René Lenoir was appointed on 1 January 1926 to replace Chazelas, but he was only to hold the post for a few weeks, after which a far better known Chef de Circonscription was to hold it for seven years; Louis-Julien Cortade, appointed on 6 February 1926. In a letter telling Cortade of the most important matters requiring his attention, Marchand said the land question was settled as far as the government was concerned.¹⁶⁴ On that assumption the government had taken some actions under the town plan at Bonanjo even before the arrival of Cortade, telling all owners of non-durable houses there to quit within six months; one, Franz Mudute Bell, was allowed to stay — that is, presumably, he was allowed to keep a non-durable house as well as the big modern one at Bonanjo which had led to his exemption from the expropriation in 1914.¹⁶⁵

In January 1926 the government ceded some land at Akwa to the Fabre et Fraissinet shipping line. This was quite separate from the Joss plateau, but the land had been confiscated in 1910 from a Bell man, Joseph Bebe Bell, who had felt all the more aggrieved at the loss of his land (501 sq.m.) because he had ordered a £2,000 wooden prefabricated house from Liverpool to erect on it. Joseph Bebe Bell's protest, aiming at securing compensation for this loss from the French, was separate from the main land case but may have contributed to the rising land agitation among the Bonadoo in the first half of 1926.

164. Marchand to Cortade, 7 Jan. 1926, files APA 11874 and 11875/A, Cameroon Archives.

165. Mudute Bell to Marchand, 13 Jan. 1926, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

It is not clear whether Cortade resumed immediately the talks begun by Chazelas and Lenoir. But there was a consistent policy of a conciliatory approach combined with a rigid legalistic position. It fitted in with the policy of consultation illustrated by the creation, at this very time, of the Conseil de Notables. The first Conseil for Douala Circonscription was set up on 25 June 1926, including the Paramount Chiefs Richard Bell, Ebongue Akwa and Mbappe Bwanga, with Eyoun Ekwalla who was soon to take over the Paramountcy of Deido on coming of age; five other Dualas; and ten Bassa and Bakoko members, including Njo Lembe and Ndokat Nongue¹⁶⁶. This membership may not have reflected the ethnic make-up of the Circonscription as was prescribed, and it may not have been because of the relative numbers of the tribes that the Bassa and Bakoko members, likely to vote as the French told them, just outnumbered the more wilful Dualas' representatives.

The Protestant Mission intervenes.

The Steering Committee of the Protestant Mission in French Cameroun met on August 13-14 1926 at Douala and afterwards sent a telegram to the Mission headquarters in Paris saying that, after hearing an appeal from the Dualas over the land case, it "thinks it impossible for the Mission to disinterest itself in this question of

166. JOC 15 July 1926.

justice." ¹⁶⁷ The acting chairman of the Committee at the meeting, Pastor Charles Maître, then took up the cause of the land with energy, and was to play an important part in the events of the next year.

On August 18 1926 a letter was written to Maître by the four Paramount Chiefs, 27 district and village chiefs, and 196 elders, calling on the Mission to help secure the return of the Bonadoo land. They repeated the common assertion that the German government had not found the "legal means" to take the land before the war began ¹⁶⁸.

The solidarity among all sections of the Dualas shown in the letter of 18 August 1926 was to continue. It was not surprising as Bonaberi was of the same family as Bell, while the Akwa and Deido people had reason to fear that the French might confiscate their land as the Germans had been intending to do. By 1926 the French had in fact abandoned this idea, but their constant justifications of the Bonanjo expropriation were bound to arouse doubts.

The Offer of Land for Sale; the Protest.

In the Journal Officiel of 1 September 1926 an announcement said conditions for sale of Domaine land

167. Record of meeting, and telegram, in René Douala Manga Bell papers.

168. Chiefs and elders to Maître, 18 Aug. 1926, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

in the Douala urban area had been approved. This meant that sales of plots of the Bonanjo land could go ahead. Three weeks later the expropriated owners of that land took regular action to restrain the sale in a protest dated 20 September 1926. It was only from those owners, as it was not a mere protest but a formal objection from aggrieved property owners, of whom 133 signed from Bonanjo, Bonapriso and Bonadouma. A note at the end said many people then on their plantations in British Cameroons, who had been unable to see the proclamation, would have signed the objection if they had been in Douala, especially "David Mandese (sic) Bell and Mambu Bell who are on the Mungo and Balong."

Addressing the Chef de Circonscription, the 133 expropriated property owners said the proposed disposal of the land was not a regular land sale but an expropriation. They said, "we have never had the intention", nor our predecessors, of ceding property over our ancestral soil under any title whatever, either to the Germans or to the French". It declared the German action of 1914 null and void, adding:

"During and since the war, French officers and administrators have often repeated to us that Germany considered Treaties as 'scraps of paper,' and the Duala people has always believed that France would render it full justice; all the more so because the Chancellor of the Empire, the same man who tried to justify the

* Underlined in original.

violation of Belgium, had not been able to obtain from the Reichstag a confirmation of the expropriation decree which would have torn up the Treaty of 1884." To make the point clearer still, the letter added that following Aymérich and Fourneau, Carde had had the words "France has given you Equality and Justice" painted on walls in Douala.¹⁶⁹

The expropriated landowners said their spirited letter was a regular objection to the land sale in accordance with clause 7, paragraph 5 of the land tenure Arrêté of 15 Sept. 1921. That text, however, did not cover disposals of Domaine land, which is what the French government considered their new measure to be. The French stuck to their legal view, so the customary note de présentation by the Secrétariat-General (giving the background for reasons for a proclamation) said simply that the Bonadoo people's objection had no force. The recourse which they had tried was administrative, not judicial; for the government, therefore, its rejection of the protest was the end of the matter. It was gazetted on 1 Nov. 1926.¹⁷⁰

By this time Maître was actively accumulating material for his defence of the Bonadoo case over the

169. Natives of Bonanjo, Bonapriso and Bonadouma to Chef de Circonscription, 20 Sept. 1926, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

170. Note de présentation of Secrétariat-General, Yaounde, 15 Oct. 1926, file on land case in Box Cameroun AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris; JOC 1 Nov. 1926.

land.* He realised that the core of the case was the contention that the Reichstag in 1914 had either halted the expropriation, or failed to approve it. So he sought from Europe copies of the Reichstag debate official reports; from one source or another he eventually found them, with the unexpected consequences to be described shortly.

At this very time Germany was admitted to the League of Nations and to its Council and Permanent Mandates Commission. Because of this the idea of an approach by the Dualas, already under discussion by October 1926 as a letter of Maître shows,¹⁷¹ must have alarmed the French if they knew of it; Marchand, who himself attended the PMC's 9th session in June 1926, had a rough passage there because of the railway forced labour, and any complaints against French rule to the Commission would now meet a receptive German audience.

By now Joseph Bebe Bell had, on 6 Sept. 1926, written to the League asking it to make the German government pay for the value of the house he had ordered for his land.¹⁷² He seems therefore to have decided not to contest the French sale of his former land, and so his protest was very different from the main one, but it did bring Dualas' views on land tenure to the PMC's attention.

* His valuable collection of documents on the case was handed much later to the present Paramount Chief, René Douala Manga Bell.

171. Maître to Max Preiswerk, 10 Oct. 1926, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

172. PMC (Permanent Mandates Commission), report of 12th session, 24 Oct. to 11 Nov. 1927.

The government did not proceed immediately with sales of Bonanjo land after rejecting the Dualas' objection of 20 Sept. Instead, at a date apparently in early November, it made a new effort at conciliation. On 9 November a letter from 88 leading Dualas to Maître mentioned compromise offers, not otherwise recorded, and said they were unacceptable.¹⁷³ Richard Bell later said relations between him and Cortade had begun to get worse about November 1926, when the Chef de Circonscription said he was overdue with the Bells' head-tax, and this may have been partly due to the land dispute. But it seems that not only Marchand but also the Ministry in Paris wanted to try to bring the Dualas to agree to a compromise instead of riding roughshod over them. Anyway, it was decided to send a Colonial Inspectorate mission to Douala to settle the land question and clear the way for urban development.

The head of the mission, Colonial Inspector-General Picanon, was in charge of the efforts at a compromise, but much of the work, including long discussions with the expropriated Dualas which began in early December, was done by his subordinate Inspector (Second Class) Moretti, who reported to the Commissioner.

The Agreement of 8 December 1926.

The "palavers" conducted by the Inspector in Douala are well recorded in the French official archives and the

173. Richard Bell and others to Maître, 9 Nov. 1926, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

Douala Manga Bell papers. They started on 4 December with a meeting at the Circonscription office between Moretti and signatories of the objection of 20 Sept. These resumed their case, going back to the German period; Richard Bell said work on the building of New-Bell had been suspended after a telegram from the Reichstag.¹⁷⁴ Moretti, repeating what Marchand had recently told the Minister,¹⁷⁵ said no trace of such an order had been found.

Richard Bell mentioned the Germans' offer of compensation, saying, "We refused and still refuse to touch this compensation, because in our view our rights have been trampled on in this expropriation, which was not done in the public interest, but only for a commercial purpose." The Bells, he said, claimed rights of property over both the Joss and Bali plateaux, and over New-Bell also; presumably they were claiming a traditional right to the land of New-Bell, for they could hardly claim a right conferred by the German measures of 1913-14.

Further discussion was fixed for Monday, Dec. 6 at the Tribal Court building; Maître was to be there as spokesman for the Bell Dualas. He had at last received copies of the 1914 Reichstag debate reports to add to his file for defence of the Douala case; he even said he had received them by air mail,¹⁷⁶ which is amazing, and

174. Report by Inspector Moretti, 8 Dec. 1926, Box Cameroun AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris.

175. Marchand to Minister, 29 Nov. 1926, Box Cameroun AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris.

176. Maître to Daniel Couve of SME, 13 Dec. 1926, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

shows great enterprise on someone's part, as the first aircraft landed in Douala only that year ¹⁷⁷ and there was no regular air service. The results of his efforts were not revealed at the meeting of Dec. 6 1926.

There Moretti repeated the government's offer, to let the expropriated people live at Bali if they recognised the government's title to the land at Joss. In the year since the offer had been first made it had not become more acceptable to the Bonadoo. Richard Bell said, "You have told us that the Germans expropriated the Joss plateau with the aim of creating a European city, and that the French have the same intention; it seems to me that that plateau is big enough for this plan to be carried out and for us to be left a part." This was quite a large concession if the Paramount Chief meant that they would let the government concede them a part of the land (which would mean acceptance of its basic claim); but he may have meant that the Bonadoo, if their title to the land were recognised, would then concede a part to the government. Anyway, the suggestion was refused and the meeting, which about 150 chiefs and elders attended, was inconclusive. Then the chiefs and elders accepted a suggestion from Maître that they should reassemble for a further meeting with the Inspector the next day and meanwhile should have a meeting with him, that same night.

About 200 chiefs and elders assembled with Maître

177. L. Moume Etia, Sites Historiques de Douala, vol.2, p. 6.

that night at the Mission at Bonadibong, in Akwa but near Bali. The missionary began by mentioning a subscription of 125,000 francs raised by the Dualas to pay for a legal action, and saying this showed their solidarity; he urged them to remain united, as the government wished to promote division among them. Then he came to his main point, which was to dash the hopes of the Dualas. He said the Reichstag debate reports of 1914, so far from showing that the German parliament had halted the expropriation as the Dualas had thought, revealed that it had fully approved it.

All the deputies in the Reichstag had voted for Röhm's "abuse of power," Maître said, except for 42 Social Democrats. And the Reichstag had approved, "which you did not know until now, and neither did I," the execution of Rudolf Duala Manga Bell and Ngosso Din. Then he read out important extracts in German, and reading and discussion went on until 3.30 a.m. "Until today," the pastor concluded, "you believed that the Reichstag had not finished with your case; you have just heard that everything was voted." The last words were stressed by Maître, and with reason. The Dualas' case was wrecked.

Maître advised the Dualas strongly against seeking any sort of legal redress; even if it succeeded, he said, it would be after many years and at a ruinous cost. Instead he urged them to seek an understanding now and to give up Joss, as it was more than sufficient for the needs of the government, while demanding full recognition of their ownership of Bali and a guarantee of no expropriation in Akwa, Deido and Bonaberi. "Unanimously," Maître recorded

in a letter describing all this, "except for three old men, the Dualas decide to entrust me with trying to make an arrangement with the government, and we separate at 6.30 in the morning after a prayer led by one of the Paramount Chiefs".¹⁷⁶

Later that day the next official meeting was held. Inspector Moretti's report says nothing about the discussions in the night and does not explain the capitulation of the Dualas. Before the meeting Maître had private talks with Moretti, and a compromise was worked out. It was then presented to the meeting in seven points. The essential point was the one which Maître had successfully urged on the Bonadoo: they should give up Joss and take land with money for building houses at Bali. There was some discussion, after which the Inspector told the Africans to discuss the matter among themselves and return the next day at 10 a.m.¹⁷⁴ Before then 150 Dualas met at Maître's house; he urged conciliation and called on them to agree among themselves before the talks with Moretti. The official meeting was attended by Cortade as well as Moretti. Several points were raised when the compromise was presented again, but it was quickly agreed in general. The Bonadoo agreed to the main points and the Paramount Chief said they would leave details to be settled between Maître and the government.

So the discussions conducted by the Colonial Inspector ended in a compromise highly favourable to the government. It got all that it asked for, even more

than Maître had advised the Dualas to accept. Maître mentioned seven points in the plan presented on 7 Dec., but at that stage there were apparently six, of which five dealt with the disposal of the land. They were:

- (1) The expropriated Dualas gave up their claim to ownership of both the Joss and the Bali plateaux;
- (2) The government confirmed its earlier decision not to carry out segregation in Akwa and Deido, but reserved the right to build or improve streets and set up administrative buildings there, and to expropriate Africans for such limited purposes and make them also move outside the "European quarter" if they had no durable houses; any alienations of land to be approved by the Commissioner in Council of Administration;
- (3) The net income from the sale of land at Joss would be spent on land allocation in Bali and improvements there, and on payments for building of solid houses by the Africans there;
- (4) The administration would complete the provision of streets, squares and water supply at Bali by the Germans, within the limits laid down by them;
- (5) Each Duala expropriated before the French occupation in the Bonadoo area would have a free parcel of land at Bali, where he would promise to build a solid house; he would become the full owner after the mise en valeur of his land had been confirmed; and after the allocation he could alienate his land with special authorisation, under the Arrêté of 15 Sept. 1921, from

the Commissioner in Council.

Curiously this list of five points, given by Marchand on the basis of Moretti's report to him, does not include a further point on the land which was included by Picanon in his own report to the Minister: that lands at New-Bell should be left to the Bonadoo, for farming.¹⁷⁸ Possibly Marchand was indicating some reservations about this. But Picanon's list was sent several weeks later and must be considered the definitive one. Certainly the Bonadoo did keep the land at New-Bell from then on. The sixth or seventh clause simply stated that Maître was accepted as the representative of the expropriated people.

After the agreement of 8 Dec. 1926, signed by Maître and Cortade, some details remained to be discussed, but Picanon felt able to report an heureuse solution.¹⁷⁹

On 12 Dec. Mudute Bell wrote to Maître appealing to him to stop the seizing of his land.¹⁸⁰ This was probably one of the many occasions when he was threatened with foreclosure on his land because of his chronic debts, and the timing was probably coincidental. So also, perhaps, was the timing of a letter which Joseph Bebe Bell later claimed to have sent on 15 Dec. about his own claim.¹⁸¹ This was a second letter to the League of Nations; unlike the first, it was sent to the French government of Cameroun

178. Report by Moretti, 8 Dec. 1926; Marchand to Cortade, 26 Dec. 1926; Box Cameroun AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris.

179. Picanon to Minister, 6 March 1927, Box Cameroun AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris.

180. Mudute Bell to Maître, 12 Dec. 1926, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

181. PMC, Report of 12th session (24 Oct.-11 Nov. 1927), Geneva.

for forwarding to the PMC, according to the League's rules on petitions – or so Bebe Bell said. But the PMC said it did not receive the letter.¹⁸¹

The Petition of 22 December 1926.

The main land case was in reality far from closed, as was to appear after a new meeting on it in January 1927. But before then a most interesting letter, several pages long, had been sent to the Commissioner by the "Chiefs and Elders of Douala." Dated 22 Dec. 1926, it was not about the land case, but was a general petition against the administration, with calls for improvements.

It was the latest of many such protest letters, but was particularly long and thorough. Its timing may well indicate a general arousing of feeling due to the land case, or a desire to demonstrate that the surrender over the Bonadoo land did not mean a general acquiescence in the colonial administration and its methods. Or it may have been due to pressure from the women, who were particularly affected by many acts listed in the protest.

The letter¹⁸² began, "The behaviour of the French government at Douala has caused the Chiefs and Elders of the town to have the honour to address the following petition to the Commissioner of the French Republic," and then went straight on to the grievances, beginning with taxation. It said the head-tax was continually rising and was now 24 francs per year, and claimed that

182. Petition of Chiefs and Elders, 22 Dec. 1926, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

the tax had been less under the Germans and had not been payable by women; the petitioners particularly attacked the taxation of women, saying that men in fact had to pay it in addition to their own tax. They said that farmers and traders – who, they implied, could pay the head-tax – were only a small proportion of the population.

The petition called for a reduction in the head-tax on men, and then went straight on to call for another, "more serious" domestic science school, for more ordinary schools, and for money for higher education. Returning then to the tax question, the petitioners called for the end of taxation of women. Then it dealt with trade licences, saying that the Germans had fixed the fee at 25 marks for each trader outside his village in 1908, and had not increased it before their expulsion, while the French were for 1927 charging 1,000 francs for a licence for purchase of palm kernels, palm oil and cocoa. They said many people had been bankrupted by this high rate; scarcely a hundred people could trade in the Douala area now, compared with many hundreds before. This must have been a reference above all to the prohibitive rise in licence fees in 1920, and although there is evidence (mentioned earlier) that many people had been able to pay the higher fees, the number of major traders may well have been less in 1926 than in 1919.

The petition had more to say about education. Besides a new Ecole Ménagère it also called for a new

Ecole Supérieure, presumably thinking the one at Yaounde was inadequate, and a vocational school. By coincidence an Arrêté for a new Vocational School at Douala had just been issued, but it was only for railway staff. In calling for more education for girls the petitioners made the interesting point that lack of it was a primary cause of many divorces.

On medical treatment, the petition thanked the Commissioner for the free treatment available, but said the Native Hospital had "wretched and dirty housing and unsuitable diet," so that Africans often paid for private treatment, expensive though it was; it named the private doctors le Bris and Thomas. This situation was a common African one and still continues.

Much of the petition dealt with the police and the courts, the subject of many complaints before. It gave a disagreeable picture of police harassment for tax. The policemen were often illiterate; they made arrests by night and on Sundays; they often imposed the 24-franc fine for non-payment of tax without finding out if it had actually been paid or not. The petition added, "It often happens that among the dozens of men arrested every day without consultation of the chiefs, there are a large number who pay two or four times during one year." Those arrested, it said, were put in irons and treated as criminals. One chief was sentenced to eight days' imprisonment and a 100-franc fine for failing to bring in his subjects' head-tax on time, even though the year for collection had not ended; on his release he went to bring in the money, but could his subjects respect him

after that, the chiefs and elders asked? They added that even schoolchildren had been arrested for tax.

Recalling that the government had acknowledged the truth of complaints against Police Commissioner Blat, the petitioners alleged that police brutality went on; corporal punishment had revived, and accused people had been beaten to make them confess. It listed people who could give information on this — Kingue Ekambi (in prison), Dipa Dibokwo of Bonaberi, Ngweny Jemaha of Bonateki, Tum of Deido and Sam Jemba of Bonateki (Deido) — and said the police should be warned not to use corporal punishment. It also claimed that there was mauvaise surveillance at night time, just as in the war years, and recommended that the police should be told of the limits to their rights in peace time.

The letter expressed dissatisfaction with the judgment of courts in Douala, and proposed detailed reforms. Apparently it accepted the existing Tribal Court, for it made a suggestion for that court — that the chairman should know the local laws and customs. This may have been suggested to reinforce the complaint made then about the abolition of chiefs' courts, that major Duala grievance. The petition said chiefs no longer had their former authority and, "the first cause of this must be the poverty caused by the taking away of their power and rights."

The petition then turned to plantations. It thanked the German and French administrations, and particularly that of Marchand and Cortade, for help in

starting plantations, but added, "most of our high hopes finish nowadays in unforeseen shocks and misfortunes." It claimed that Europeans had damaged some prosperous plantations while felling trees, and had prevented Africans from working independently next door to a European at the same plantation or workyard. The last point is obscure, but the other accusations certainly are not. It said Daniel Siliki Same, the elder of Akwa who had had a plantation at Njanga since 1911, had lost all his workers when the Compagnie du Nord was allowed to operate in the immediate area; the company's workers had stolen crops, including a whole hectare of cocoa. The same company had occupied a part of a neighbouring plantation owned by Penda Dipoko of Deido, and Dipoko had been beaten by employees of the firm when he told them to leave, and then gaoled, after which he had died as a result of the beating.

This allegation, thrown away casually near the end of the letter, is the most serious of all. The accusations of Europeans interfering with Dualas' plantations were to continue and become much more serious; by the 1930s much worse acts, including regular rounding up of planters' employees and even planters and their families for forced labour for white plantations, were certainly occurring. Things were not quite so bad in 1926 despite the serious acts already alleged then.

Second thoughts on the land compromise.

The petition showed the Dualas' irrepressible spirit of dissent. But although this cannot have pleased Marchand or Cortade (the reactions are not recorded) these showed a conciliatory approach, perhaps owing to Pastor Maître's mediation, when further talks on the Bonadoo land case were held early in the new year.

These talks, however, soon led to a Bonadoo move to back out of the agreement. They may have agreed to that in a state of bewilderment after Maître's revelations about the 1914 events. Anyway second thoughts soon emerged. In 1927 the breach between the Dualas and the French was to widen. The nominal issue was the land case, but there was to be a more general Duala anti-colonial movement culminating in the nationalist upsurge of 1929-31.

CHAPTER FOUR

NATIONALISM AND DEPRESSION, 1927 TO 1934

There was a notable revival of anti-colonial feeling in Douala after 1927, with considerable popular backing for the protest leaders. To some extent the movement was connected with the Bonadoo land case. At some point in 1927 the Bell Dualas decided to go back on the December 1926 agreement and challenge the whole land expropriation again; and this led to increasingly strong opposition to the French administration generally. But the peak of nationalist activity in 1929-31 had other causes also.

It is not clear when the Bonadoo decided to reopen the whole question of the land seized in 1914. They expressed some reservations only a month after the 1926 agreement, at a meeting with Maître and Cortade.¹ But they were relatively minor ones, and Marchand quickly conceded one point by deciding not to insist on renunciation of the Bonadoo's title to Bali as well as Joss; the government did not accept the Bell view that the expropriation had never taken effect at Bali, but it was ready to accept an explicit renunciation of the title to Joss alone, not both Joss and Bali.²

Picanon's report on 6 March 1927³ did not mention any "second thoughts" by the Bonadoo. It did mention a

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1. Note, signed by Cortade and Maître, of 8 January 1927 meeting, René Douala Manga Bell papers.
 2. Note by Maître on meeting with Marchand, late January 1927, René Douala Manga Bell papers.
 3. Picanon to Minister, Yaounde 6 March 1927, Box Cameroun AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris.

further blow to their hopes: the start of sales of expropriated land at Joss, which had already raised 899,000 francs. That did not prevent the decision to go back on the agreement, which may or may not have been connected with an important event for the Bell Dualas on 7 March 1927. On that day Richard Din Manga Bell offered his resignation as Paramount Chief.

Resignation of Richard Bell.

His letter of resignation to the Commissioner said nothing about the land question, but referred only to the conduct of the Chef de Circonscription. He alleged rudeness and arrogance towards himself by Cortade. After the quarrel over tax collection the climax, so the traditional ruler said, had come on 19 Feb. 1927, when Cortade came up to him at Bali and criticised him over the building of wattle huts for temporary habitation by Africans intending to build European-style houses. Richard Bell said that when he tried to explain, Cortade angrily shouted "What do you mean by talking to me like that, Richard Bell, you, the Chief...! You are all pigs! pigs! pigs!"

Even after that, said the Paramount Chief, he had not reacted; he had used all his influence to stop the elders from complaining to the Commissioner and had thought Cortade would not act like that again. But then, while he and the Notables Eyoum Moulobi and Elonde Moulobi had been walking along a path across the plateau, near the house of a

European named Aptel they heard Cortade, who had stopped in his car, shout, "Sweine! Cochons!" (it is strange that Richard Bell misspelt the German word). Later, at the Circonscription office, he had been cut short and sent out by Cortade while trying to explain again about the non-solid houses at Bali.

After all this, Richard Bell wrote, he had decided to resign as Chef Supérieur. But to show his loyalty he would continue to encourage his people in the way of collaboration and help secure full and rapid collection of taxes.⁴

Richard Bell may simply have intended to force Marchand to remove or discipline Cortade by the letter, but its wording suggests he really did intend to resign. One might have attributed the resignation of Richard Bell, who had agreed to the land settlement, to a decision to go back on that settlement by the Bonadoo chiefs and elders, were it not that they were soon afterwards to appoint him as their delegate in France for the reopening of the case. Possibly he was already thinking of going to France for that purpose.

A fortnight lapsed between the sending of the letter and Marchand's acting on it. Then an Arrêté of 21 March 1927, published in the Journal Officiel of 15 April, declared that, "The resignation from his post offered by the Regional Chief Richard Bell, in Douala Circonscription, is accepted." No successor was named as

4. Richard Bell to Marchand, 7 March 1927, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

Paramount Chief. or Chef de Région, another rank given to some traditional rulers including Richard Bell.

It is clear that Théodore Lobe Bell, secretary and uncle to Richard Bell, succeeded him as Paramount Chief, but he was apparently not formally appointed by the French then. He was a very junior son of old "King Bell," born just three years before his father's death, on 13 March 1894. Thus he was considerably younger than his nephew. He had been a teacher under the Germans. Why he was appointed is unclear, especially as he must have been associated with Richard Bell in the land case. Once again the claim of Prince Alexandre Douala Manga Bell to the succession was either not considered, or rejected; at that of all times, the French would not want to arouse memories of Rudolf Bell, the martyr in the cause of the lost land, and build up the hereditary throne of the Bonadoo, by appointing Ndoumb'a Douala as Paramount Chief.

Richard Bell's departure; moves to reopen the case.

The Paramount Chieftancy of Deido changed hands about the same time as that of Bell, but because young Eyoum Ekwalla reached his majority; the décision of 23 Feb. 1927 appointing him⁵ was not apparently linked with other events in Douala at that time, nor with Eboa Epee's imprisonment for illicit liquor dealing a few months later.

5. JOC 15 March/1 April 1927.

For some months after March 1927 the documents do not record further discussions on the land case. Disregarding whatever he may have known about the Dualas' continued reservations, Marchand went ahead with arrangements for the Bali land allocation, no doubt hoping that opposition to the settlement would melt away when the free plots of land and the money for house building became available. A special Arrêté needed to be issued and approved by the French President to authorise expenditure on the building of Dualas' houses in Bali from the proceeds of sales of land at Joss. The Arrêté was signed on 7 June 1927 and the presidential Decree on 10 August 1927.⁶

Before this decree appeared Cortade had reported, on July 10, a "new agitation" over the land question; Mudute Bell seemed to have made some new complaints and said Maître did not consider the agreement definite.⁷ Cortade was from then on suspicious of Maître and also of Rusillon, suspecting them of being behind the new agitation; he was no doubt distorting in his mind the fact that the missionaries were still trying to mediate rather than call for unconditional submission by the Dualas. On 12 July, similarly, Marchand criticised Maître.⁸ And by mid-1927 the French were linking Duala dissidence with the Germans, of whom there were a number

6. Journal Officiel de la République Française, Paris, 18 August 1927, p. 8810.

7. Cortade to Marchand, 10 July 1927, Box Cameroun AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris.

8. Marchand to Minister, 12 July 1927, same Box.

by then in Douala following the readmission of German firms to French Cameroun in 1926. Mandessi Bell was a prime suspect, as he was a leading Bonadoo personality with wealth which he used to subsidise the land agitation, and had contacts in Paris through his son-in-law Mamadou Diop.

Marchand, who said Maître was not working to rid the Dualas of their "illusions," did not say what the Dualas were still hoping for. He and Cortade seem, from the latter's letter⁷ of 10 July, to have known of Richard Bell's intention to pursue the question in France. Thus it is very surprising that the government gave him an exit visa, which it could have refused; but it did, for Richard Bell sailed for France quite openly on the Chargeurs Réunis Steamer Hoggar (on 12 July, according to Isaac Moume Etia's son, who at the age of 13 travelled on the same ship⁹). He claimed to be going to negotiate sales of cocoa from his plantations, but the French could hardly have believed that this was his only reason for going (and they would not have favoured such direct sales much anyway). In fact Richard Bell acted as a representative of his people in the land case when in France, and this had most probably been agreed before he left.

Pastor Maître also sailed for France about the same time. He was to work in French Togo later, but at first he was in Paris and remained in touch, like Richard

9. Interview, Léopold Moume Etia.

Bell, with the Bonadoo who were trying to reopen the land case.

For a year at least after land became available at Bali for the Dualas expropriated there and at Joss, it seems that not one person qualified came forward to claim his plot of land, still less to start building a house and claim the promised financial assistance for this.¹⁰ There was a complete boycott to support the call for revision of the agreement of December 1926. Some people may have been pressured into observing the boycott, but in such a small community it must have been quite easy to secure solidarity on a strongly-felt issue.

From mid-1927 leaders of the Bonadoo had decided to go back on the agreement and seek a reversal of the whole expropriation – nothing less; they reverted wholly to their former claim, that the expropriation was null and void. They also continued, however, to discuss points of detail with the French. Probably these talks were a cover for the real intention to try for a complete revision through the efforts of Richard Bell, Mandessi Bell and their French contacts.

In Douala leading members of the movement included Mudute Bell and Lobe Manga Priso, who had played a similar role before 1914.¹¹ Lobe Bell seems at least to have agreed with the aims. Mandessi Bell used his wealth and influence to help the cause. He was said to

10. Annual Report for Douala Circonscription for 1929, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

11. e.g. Lobe Manga Priso to Maître, 31 Aug. 1927, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

have made an initial contribution of 40,000 francs for Richard Bell's efforts in France. The total initial collection for that purpose was said in an official report to have amounted to 100,000 francs.¹² What Richard Bell and Maître were being asked to do initially is unclear, especially if one doubts the suspicions of conspiracy expressed by Marchand after the reading of some of Richard Bell's letters in 1930.¹³ But whatever their sponsors in Douala were thinking of, they included others besides the Bonadoo; although other Dualas had supported the Bells over the land the wider anti-colonial movement which was to come into the open soon afterwards may have started by 1927. Ebongue Akwa seems to have been a leader of the dissidents corresponding with Richard Bell, until his death in late 1927.¹⁴ His successor, Hans Ngaka Akwa – the fifth son of Tete Dika Mpondo to occupy the throne – was also to be such a leader, probably the most militant chiefly dissident of all.

It seems clear that the early efforts of Richard Bell in Paris involved exploiting his uncle Mandessi Bell's contacts with the Senegalese politician Blaise Diagne.¹⁵ In 1927 Mandessi secured the help of Diagne in two incidents in which he clashed with the authorities in Douala. One concerned a plot of land owned by Ndoumb'a Douala. Diagne at first thought the plot had been mortgaged to Mandessi Bell

12. Note for "Director" (probably Director of Political Affairs, Colonial Ministry), unsigned, Paris 7 June 1928, Box Cameroun AP II 29, Archives SOM, Paris.

13. Marchand to Minister, 22 May 1930, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

14. Richard Bell to Maître, letters of 14 Nov. and 15 Dec. 1927, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

15. Marchand to Minister, 21 March 1928, file APA 10572/N, Cameroon Archives; Marchand to Minister, 21 May 1928, Box Cameroun AP II 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

and protested at a report that the government was planning to seize it.¹⁶ The Minister told him, after correspondence with Yaounde, that there had been no mortgage.¹⁶ But Diagne's intervention to prevent what he thought was an attempt to cheat the Duala businessman and opposition leader suggests that he had been approached for help over the land case also, no doubt through Mandessi Bell and Maria and Mamadou Diop. Although very much an "establishment" figure by now, Diagne may have been ready to take up some African causes like that one; he may have been reminded of the Lebou land case in Dakar.

The other incident arose in June 1927 when Mandessi Bell's driver, driving his car without him, ran over and killed a man; when a policeman went to the businessman's house to arrest the driver he, Mandessi, was said to have tried to stop the arrest and fought with the policeman, who took him to the police station but then freed him.¹⁷ Then Mandessi used his contact with Diagne, who sent a telegram to Yaounde protesting that Mandessi had been arrested for an offence by his employee. Correspondence followed, during which Marchand and Cortade made many allegations against Mandessi Bell, unconnected with this unfortunate case.

New moves in Paris and Douala in 1928.

Mandessi Bell's important role in the opposition was known to the French who, whether from genuine suspicion

16. Marchand to Minister, 2 July 1927; Minister to Diagne, 4 Sept. 1928; Box Cameroun AP II 30, Archives SOM, Paris.
17. Minister to Diagne, 23 Dec. 1927, Box Cameroun AP II 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

or to discredit him, accused him of links with a M. Dubouille¹⁸ – the first of many West Indians linked with the anti-colonial movement in Douala – and, notably, with the Germans. Early in 1928 Marchand was wondering whether the Dualas' attitude to the land question, which to him seemed "incomprehensible," was due to Mandessi Bell "manoeuvred" by the Germans.¹⁹ While this reflected a constant pre-occupation of the French in Cameroun, and the land agitation can safely be attributed to the genuine feelings of the expropriated people, it does seem that the Bonadoo thought some outside intervention was possible to reverse a decision which they must have known the administration in Yaounde would never alter freely.

By March 1928 Richard Bell had twice met Diagne,²⁰ but he was disappointed with the Senegalese, as so many Africans were with good reason. Diagne may well have decided to give the Dualas no support in the land case. In May Marchand said definitely that the Bonadoo had sought Diagne's aid,¹⁵ and showed no awareness of any rebuff from Diagne. But the impression that there was one is supported by the fact that later in 1928 the French administration in Cameroun allowed Mandessi Bell to visit France. That visit may have led to more talks on the land case, if only with the Protestant Mission (which arranged the trip) rather than Diagne, but if so there is no record of them. In Douala, however, there were many more meetings and discussions before the opposition decided finally to

18. Commissioner to Minister, 21 July 1927, same Box.

19. Marchand to Minister, 2 Jan. 1928, same Box.

20. Marchand to Minister, 22 May 1930, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris, quoting letter of Richard Bell to Njembele Ekwe, 23 March 1928.

approach the League of Nations.

There were talks between Bonadoo leaders and the government on details of the Bali land resettlement.²¹ In Paris Richard Bell met Marchand to discuss these in March 1928.²² The Commissioner, who warned Richard Bell that he might risk imprisonment (apparently by fund-raising for a lawyer's fees),²² may have guessed that the talks on details were a cover for a basic challenge to the land agreement. So they probably were, but a complicating factor was an apparently genuine fear among the Dualas, in 1928, that the government was planning to expropriate their plantations. A big meeting on 17 Feb. 1928 called for recognition of Duala rights in the area of the plantations,²³ soon after an apparent attempt (reported by Mudute Bell) by Cortade to secure the agreement of Prince Alexandre to expropriation there.²¹ The Prince refused, but it is revealing that Cortade thought he might agree. However, there is no evidence to confirm that the government seriously had that idea, contrary to its normal policy.

There may have been limits to the pliability of Alexandre Ndoumb'a Douala Manga Bell, but he seems to have broken the boycott and accepted a plot of land at Bali in 1928. An Arrêté of 11 Sept. 1928²⁴ giving him a 25,000 francs subsidy for completion of a house at Bali was almost certainly for a house on one of the plots offered

21. Richard Bell to Maître, 27 March 1928, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

22. Richard Bell to Maître, apparently late March 1928, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

23. Report of meeting in René Douala Manga Bell papers.

24. JOC 1 Oct. 1928.

to the expropriated landowners. If so, the subsidy was generous in view of Marchand's admission, to Richard Bell a few months earlier, that the net payment might amount to little or nothing. Presumably the prince was well rewarded for breaking the boycott, to encourage others to do so.

In fact the general boycott continued into 1929. The Circonscription Annual Report for 1928, discussing it, said the younger "literate bloc" were favourable to French views;²⁵ but this, even if true, would have made little difference, as the older generation of the actual owners of the land seized in 1914 were still alive and active.

To break their boycott the Administrator replacing Cortade, who was absent for some time in 1928-29, held talks with Pastor Rusillon, now spokesman for the Bonadoo, and on 24 Dec. 1928 made a new concession: that all the money raised from auctioning of land at Joss would be available for building of houses on the plots offered at Bali, and that people need not build solid houses there.²⁶ This was an improvement, which possibly made the French hope the Bells would accept the deal when the Arrêté to allocate land at Bali (held up since 1927) was eventually promulgated. But by the time it appeared the Bonadoo had taken further action.

The League of Nations had heard about the Duala land case from the Annual Report for 1926, which mentioned

25. Quoted in Gouellain, Douala, p. 235.

26. Acting Chef de Circonscription to Rusillon, 24 Dec. 1928, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

the agreement of 8 December; this was discussed briefly by the PMC in July 1927.²⁷ Later, at its twelfth session in Oct.-Nov. 1927, the Commission discussed Bebe Bell's petition seeking compensation for the value of his house ordered in 1910, but merely said no letter in accordance with the regulations on petitions had been received from him.²⁸ Joseph Bebe Bell's frustrations cannot have encouraged the idea of an approach to the League, but the mere fact that it had heard about a Duala land grievance may have encouraged that idea, canvassed since 1926. The failure of efforts in France could have been another factor. Anyway, by early 1929 the Bonadoo seem to have decided to stop the talks with the government on details of the land deal, and proceed with their parallel efforts to reverse the whole deal, turning optimistically to the toothless watchdog in Geneva.

The peak of the protest activity in the Mandate period was to follow. But in studying that activity one must never forget how double-edged the Dualas' attitude was. Every year that they continued joining in protests their children emerged in ever greater numbers from French schools, often to join the ranks of Clerk-Interpreters and other junior officials. The younger, French-educated generation was already rising in importance by 1928, as the passage quoted earlier shows. The veterans of the German era were still firmly in control, but their efforts to

27. PMC, reports of 11th session, Geneva 7 July 1927.

28. PMC, report of 12th session, Geneva 11 Nov. 1927.

advance their children along French lines went so far as sending some to France for further studies.

The government at this time did not sponsor any Duala students for study in France, except for one fisheries officer, Zacharie Ndoumbe Bouegne.²⁹ But in 1925-27 Henri Lob'a Manga Bell, brother of Prince Alexandre; Léopold Moume Etia, son of the leading Clerk-Interpreter; and two daughters of Erdmann Eteki left for France for schooling. Eberhard Lobe Manga Priso and Franz Mudute Bell, leaders of the Bell land agitation; Alfred Tokoto Essome, chief of Bonadoumbe; and Pastor Kuo Issedou each sent a son there about that time. David Mandessi Bell placed his feet firmly in both camps at an early stage, being the first Duala to send children to school in France: a son, Sam, and a daughter, Christine, in 1919. Christine died there in 1927 but in that year another son, Jean, went to France.³⁰ He and Sam were visited by their father in 1928, when he went to France with Pastor Modi Din under the auspices of the Protestant Mission.

But even though some of its members went so far to give their children a French education, a hard core of Dualas of the class of self-employed planters, traders and urban landlords opposed French rule persistently. Other Dualas supported them but those elders, whose non-wage income was steadily rising until the Great Depression and made their position more secure vis-à-vis the authorities than that of other Camerounians, were the leaders.

29. Interview, Léopold Moume Etia.

30. Interview, Sam Mandessi Bell.

As these committed nationalists emerged the French became ever more worried about their supposed foreign helpers and advisers: the Protestant Mission, left-wing movements which inspired a general warning about African voluntary organisations by Marchand in 1927,³¹ and above all the Germans. Within a year of their readmission to Cameroun (following Germany's membership of the League of Nations) in 1926, their Woermann Linie and Deutsch Kamerun Gesellschaft (DKG, called "la Dékagé") were running, respectively, many steamer services to Douala and a major store there. The authorities were always watching them, suspecting them – and their numerous compatriots in British Cameroons – of spying for the German government and influencing Africans.³² Almost certainly the Germans in Douala had nothing like the influence feared, but they might have encouraged the idea that the French Mandate would soon end; that idea, for some reason or another, was widespread,³³ and was likely to encourage Dualas' protests.

The Petition of 11 August 1929.

Early in 1929 Richard Bell formed an entirely legal welfare organisation, the "Association France-Cameroun," in Paris;³⁴ and helped to start, also in Paris, a newspaper in Duala, Mbale (Truth), which was mainly the work of Joseph Ebele of Bonaberi, a worker,

31. Circular by Commissioner, 10 Aug. 1927, file APA 11023, Cameroon Archives.

32. Commissioner to Minister, 18 Aug. 1927, file APA 10222, Cameroon Archives; Cortade to Marchand, 26 Dec. 1927, Box Cameroun AP II 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

33. Buell, op.cit., Vol. II, p. 331n.

34. Circular on Revolutionary Activity, Paris 30 May 1929, p.17; file APA 110367, Cameroon Archives.

and Gaston Kingue Jong of Deido, a student.³⁵

The French became suspicious of these moves, and later, particularly, of Richard Bell and his contacts; in 1930 Marchand was to become convinced that the former Paramount Chief was the arch-plotter. Mbale was banned in French Cameroon on 22 March 1929, after the appearance of its first issue. It had an article by Richard Bell, defending his martyred brother, but the most offending item for the French may have been a request by the Editor, Ebele, for news items about Cameroun to be published in Mbale or sent to British, French or German newspapers.³⁶ The ban was lifted later,³⁷ and Mbale was never really hostile to the French; it had no apparent connection with the important protest activity occurring during the brief period of its publication (1929-30). But as an African venture using an African language it was another expression of implicitly anti-colonial feeling.

Whatever he was doing behind the scenes (it was probably less than the French imagined) Richard Bell was the overt representative of the Bonadoo in the colonial capital. They decided in 1929 to formalise their delegation of power to him, to help him with the efforts, on which they had by then decided to concentrate, to seek some outside intervention to reverse the expropriation.

35. Interview, Gaston Kingue Jong, Douala; information from Ebele in René Douala Manga Bell papers.

36. Mbale 15 January 1929, in file APA 10889, Cameroon Archives.

37. Arrêté 27 Sept. 1929, JOC 15 Oct. 1929

On 28 March 1929, in Douala, 101 people of Bonadoo and Bonaberi signed a procuration, a legal document granting power of attorney, to entrust Richard Bell with further negotiations over the land question. It was made only by the people affected by the land issue, the Bonadoo, and the Bonaberi who were of the same family. It was not a vague delegation of powers but a precise legal document which it was intended that the former traditional ruler should use somehow to advance the cause.

It began, "We, the undersigned Chiefs and Elders of the Clans and Communities of Bonanjo, Bonapriso, Bonaduma,, Bonaberi, Bonasana (sic), Djebale, Bonamatumbe, Sardino Bonandale (sic), and Bodjungo (sic), all places and villages situated in the Circonscription of Douala (Cameroun)," and went on to confer on Richard Bell, "domiciled in Douala but now in Europe to deal with business affairs there," pouvoir et procuration for all discussions, requests, etc. on the land question and all other questions interesting the Duala tribe, "whether on the banks of the river Mongo (sic) or on those of the rivers Wuri (sic), Dibamba, Njanga and others." The signatories included Lobe Bell, Mudute Bell, Priso Bell, Mbappe Bwanga and Mudute Bile.³⁸ The wording suggests that the Dualas were still worried about the possible expropriation of their plantation land along the rivers named. It could even be read as suggesting that other matters were to be raised by Richard Bell besides those

38. Text in special sub-file in Box Cameroun AP 615 file 1, Archives SOM, Paris.

relating to land tenure, but the phrasing might have been just cautiously comprehensive legal language.

This move came at a time of rising anti-colonial feeling in Douala. An indication was that early in 1929 Dualas were sympathising with the Bayas, in revolt against forced labour and other oppression far away on the eastern border of French Cameroun and across the border in Ubangi-Shari.³⁹ The state of Duala feeling was no doubt one reason for the ban on Mbale, especially as the government must have been expecting trouble following the granting of legal powers to Richard Bell, at the time when it was at last preparing the Arrêté approving the Bali land allocation plan.

The Arrêté was issued on 10 May 1929. The note de présentation said that objections to the disposal of the land were unfounded because the Germans had carried out the expropriation legally; this was an answer to the Bonadoo objection that the government could not distribute the Bali land as it had never become its owner, which was one of the objections to the land deal. The proclamation approved the general plan for allocation among the expropriated people; details of the plan would not normally be put into such an Arrêté, and were contingent, in any case, on people breaking the boycott to accept the plots offered. The Arrêté gave them three months in which to claim their plots.

On 25 June 1929 the Bonadoo leaders sent their first known message to the League, a telegram saying Richard Bell

39. Special Police Commissioner, Douala, to Chef de Circonscription, 31 Jan. 1929, file APA 11201/N, Cameroon Archives.

was their representative and accusing the government of refusing to approve the granting of powers to him.⁴⁰ It could hardly refuse this except by refusing the official certification of the signatures on the procuration, and it seems, as will be explained below, that that was what it did. If so, if a copy was sent to Richard Bell it was legally valueless. That could explain why it was the four Paramount Chiefs, not Richard Bell, who sent the big petition to the League on 11 August 1929.

On July 1 the Bells made a formal request for abrogation of the Arrê[^]té of 10 May; the texts of this and of a letter to Marchand on 25 July are not in the documents.⁴⁰ Marchand was in Europe at the time, and attended the PMC's 15th session, from 1 to 19 July. A question was asked about a reference in the 1928 Annual Report to the budget provision for Bali house building payments, and Marchand replied that the land question, which he recalled in outline, had not been settled when the Germans left (he presumably meant that the compensation aspect had not been settled, and that the land at Bali was a sort of compensation).⁴¹ On Joseph Bebe Bell's case Marchand said he had told him of the Commission's decision that it had no competence in such cases. This had apparently been after the PMC's session in November 1927; in 1928 Bebe Bell tried vainly to seek redress in a French court in Douala.⁴²

40. Petition of 11 August 1929 with related documents, file 1, Box Cameroun AP 615, Archives SOM, Paris.

41. PMC, report of 15th session, 1-19 July 1929.

42. Report of case, 24 April 1928, in file APA 10890, Cameroon Archives.

In June 1929 Me. Henri Jean-Louis, a lawyer from Guadeloupe, visited Douala.⁴³ He probably contacted the leaders of the Bonadoo then; after returning to France he was to act as their lawyer in the land case. He may have been the lawyer whose consultation led to Marchand's warning to Richard Bell about fund-raising. But he was able to travel to Douala freely, although Cortade, now back, was busy finding out who were the protest leaders, and made a list of them on 12 July.

Cortade took the protests very seriously, saying that besides the land question there was a call for reduction of taxes and even for a reduced role for France and some self-government.⁴⁴ In fact the Dualas' nationalistic feelings were to go even further than he suggested. The Chef de Circonscription said a meeting on the land case had been held in a Protestant church, and accused Rusillon of being "a dangerous fanatic" who believed that Africans and Europeans had equal rights in the land case and thus encouraged the dissidents. He also named a German, Herr Tritschler of the DKG. He felt able to identify many Duala dissident leaders:

In Paris — Richard Bell;

In Douala — Bell : Lobe Bell, Mudute Bell, Anjo Bell,
Priso Bell and Njembele Ekwe;

Akwa : Siliki Same, Edinguele Meetom, Pastor
Lotin Same and Pastor Kuo Issedou;

Deido : Lea Elong, Jemba Muduru, Mbedi Ebele
and Mukoko Ebumbu;

Bonaberi: "some lesser confederates."⁴⁴

43. Commissioner to Minister, 22 May 1930, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

44. Cortade to Marchand, 12 July 1929, file APA 10227, Cameroon Archives.

This was probably an accurate list, many of the people named being well known as nationalists at that time. What is very strange is that Mandessi Bell was not included; a few months later he was awarded the *Mérite Indigène* for his cocoa plantations,⁴⁵ and it looks as though he was no longer active in the opposition. Modi Din, who after travelling to France with Mandessi returned in mid-1929 and then worked in the Douala area, was suspected of opposition activity by the French in 1930,⁴³ and may indeed have been active in the land case then as he had been before 1914. Cortade had apparently not discovered the prominent role of Ngaka Akwa in the opposition.

The Chef de Circonscription suggested deportation to the north for the activists, but his idea was not acted upon. So Lobe Bell was able to sign, with the other three Paramount Chiefs – Ngaka Akwa, Eyoum Ekwalla and Mbappe Bwanga – the big petition to the League of Nations on the land case, on 11 August 1929.

The telegram sent to Geneva a few weeks earlier had called briefly for the annulment of the 1914 expropriation, and said the petition giving details would follow with the procuration to Richard Bell. Interestingly, it began, "Relative our petition 18 August 1919." The petition itself also recalled that earlier document – an indication of the Dualas' outlook.

The petition was in German.⁴⁶ It spoke generally

45. JOC 15 Jan. 1930.

46. Text in file 1, Box Cameroun AP 615, Archives SOM, Paris (French translation).

of land tenure and asked the League if continued land expropriations by the French in various parts of Cameroun should not be annulled, and if Africans' property rights should not be "subjectively recognised" and "absolutely objectively accorded." On the Duala land case the paramount chiefs said the French based their argument on the legality of the German expropriation, which they then proceeded to challenge. They said the German action had been due to a "passion for speculation" and contrary to Article 3 of the 1884 Treaty. However, they did not claim that the Reichstag had stopped the expropriation in 1914 (they probably remembered Pastor Maître's revelations), only that its approval had been influenced by news of Duala Manga's arrest, which may well have been correct. The petitioners enclosed a copy of a report on the land case by a member of the British military administration.*

Coming to the 1926 agreement, the paramount chiefs said the government had gone back on it, but did not make it very clear how. They said a plea for roads at Koumassi to help the Bonapriso and Bonaduma expropriation victims to build houses outside Bali had been rejected. They also alleged that building of solid houses at Bali had been held up (they named three applicants affected) because an applicant for a building permit had to recognise the government's possession of the land and pay it a rent of a franc per year.

* It is not in the file now.

There are many puzzling points. Instead of concentrating on the Duala case which involved a German action the petitioners called in question (admittedly briefly) expropriations by the French all over Cameroun, a seemingly useless distraction from the main issue. Their statement about the Reichstag in 1914 was likely to be more effective in supporting the French case than their own. The Koumassi streets question had little relevance unless it was cited to show general French ill-will. As for the Bali land and houses, who were the applicants not getting building permits? Expropriation victims breaking the boycott?

As a statement of the case for restoration of the expropriated land this petition was not very skilful. But it was an expression of the nationalistic spirit abroad, which as elsewhere in Africa often focussed on land tenure. The paramount chiefs said denial of Africans' right to land must "rightly be considered the brutal antithesis of all feeling of equity and justice, which formerly animated the noble desire of the European powers to educate the primitive peoples physically, morally and intellectually." Their concluding remarks are even more quotable:

"The viewpoint of all colonising powers that 'Negroes are overgrown children' is perhaps partly founded, but one must not forget that after childhood comes adolescence and then mature age. Men who, because they turned to the League of Nations to claim from it their natural rights in an innocent fashion, are accused of the crime of high treason against the Mandatory government,

and surrounded by troops and thus deprived of their freedom of action; these men, I say, could nonetheless be considered to have left childhood long ago."

Here the traditional rulers seem to have been referring to some severe repressive action, but it seems there was none at that time. Possibly they were referring in high-flown language to police searches not followed by arrests.

The solidarity of all four main sections of the Dualas continued, and the petition gave one explanation of this by accusing the government of selling Africans' land at Akwa, Deido and Bonaberi. This may have been land taken by expropriations considered legal by the French but not by their former owners; the petition was apparently challenging the French law on expropriations, as well as France's benefiting from a German expropriation. Cortade said⁴⁴ that some Dualas still feared expropriation in Akwa and Deido.

The petitioners concluded with the request that, "The League of Nations should order at a high level, and proclaim publicly, that our property over our land holdings in Douala and elsewhere in Cameroun must return to its previous state." Thus they claimed the return of all the expropriated land – no more question of any compromise.

"Loss" of the petition; further moves.

The organisers of the petition of 11 August 1929

may have hoped that it would be considered by the next session of the Permanent Mandates Commission, the 16th. But the prospects of that were spoiled by the error of sending the petition, with the procuration, direct to Geneva and not through the Mandatory government as required. Jean-Louis, in a letter to the Chiefs and Elders of Douala on 1 Dec. 1929 (later seen by the police), criticised them for the error.⁴⁷ Presumably the petition and enclosures were returned to the paramount chiefs and then sent by them to Cortade for forwarding to the Commissioner and by him to Geneva.

Several months later a senior official at the Ministry in Paris said he had heard that the petition had been sent again on 11 Nov. 1929 but had not reached Geneva after eight months.⁴⁸ And in fact it was on 3 Sept. 1930 that Cortade sent the documents to Marchand!⁴⁹

It seems strongly as though Cortade tucked the petition away in a drawer, instead of passing it on, and the official's note in Paris in July 1930 led to a query by Marchand and the forwarding of the petition and procuration. Before sending the letter on Cortade had the 101 signatures certified; the need for this formality may have enabled him to prevent the granting of legal powers to Richard Bell between March and August 1929.

Marchand may have disapproved of Cortade's apparent sharp practice, but he fully agreed with him about

47. Marchand to Minister, 17 March 1930, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

48. Head of 1^{er} Bureau of Direction Politique, Ministry of the Colonies, Paris, note of 15 July 1930, file 1, Box Cameroun AP 615, Archives SOM, Paris.

49. Cortade to Marchand, 3 Sept. 1930, same file.

the character of the Duala dissidents. He seems, however, to have imposed a restrained policy in dealing with them. Certainly nobody appears to have been arrested for the 11 August 1929 petition. The paramount chiefs probably did not prepare that document alone, though Ngaka Akwa may well have played an important part. The opposition leaders named by Cortade, and others, may have done the essential work on it and then had it signed by the rulers who were thought to be the proper people to sign on behalf of the Dualas. Subsequent events were to show that the French were careful not to punish people for sending petitions to the League alone, even if that were the real reason for punishment inflicted on other grounds.

Meanwhile the boycott was continued. On 25 Oct. 1929, at the same time as an Arrê[^]té rejecting a legal objection (presumably that of 1 July), another allocated property at Bali to Lebanese businessmen, the brothers Chidiack, and right of occupancy over another plot to the Cie. de Distribution de l'Energie Electrique (which was to install Douala's first general electricity supply). It seems these may not have been in the area promised to the expropriated Bonadoo; but the allocation was an assertion of the government's claim to own all the Bali land, and possibly a warning that it could make other disposals of the land offered to the expropriated people if these did not take it.

Even so, by the end of 1929 only four people had decided to apply for the plots. The deadline had been

extended and was to be again, many times, to allow people to break the boycott. Cortade expressed satisfaction that four had done so, and said, "It is the gullible ones who are in trouble now."⁵⁰ This was surprising optimism as four was almost nothing out of several hundreds. The rest decided to challenge the proclamations of 10 May and 25 Oct. 1929 in court. Lobe Bell brought an action before the Conseil du Contentieux du Cameroun, which heard legal cases involving the administration, on behalf of "the native collectivities of Bonanjo, Bonadouma and Bonapriso, property owners at Douala," challenging the government's right to dispose of the land.⁵¹ Me. Jean-Louis acted as counsel in the case, which was brought formally on 31 January 1930. Six months were to pass before he produced a long memorandum setting out Lobe Bell's case,⁵¹ and the case itself was to go on longer still.

The Self-Government Petition of 19 December 1929.

Before this legal action began another, very different action had been taken by Lobe Bell and the other three paramount chiefs. On 19 December 1929 they sent a second petition to the League of Nations, not dealing with the land question but calling for the total

50. Douala Circonscription Annual Report 1929, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

51. Memorandum by Me. Jean-Louis for defence of Lobe Bell, file 1, Box Cameroun AP 615, Archives SOM, Paris; hereinafter referred to as "Jean-Louis Memorandum."

abrogation of the French Mandate and the granting of self-government to French Cameroun.

It was a remarkable document for the Africa of 1929. Its detailed background will be examined shortly; the general background was certainly the growth of anti-colonial feeling among the Dualas in that year. The land case was a major factor in this; among others may have been the worsening Great Depression. Prices of palm kernels, palm oil and cocoa, of which Duala planters were major producers, were already falling (on this more later). For the moment total producer incomes remained fairly constant with increased production, but the Dualas were feeling the pinch already and this may have increased their resentment, even though the petition did not mention the Depression specifically.

The petition was signed by the four paramount chiefs but its considerable difference from that of 11 August suggests that both were written by others than those chiefs. Written in German, it said it was "the petition of the Camerounians before the League of Nations concerning the absolute reform of the political system and administration of Cameroun."⁵² The rulers claimed to be expressing the decisions of a "popular assembly."

After recalling the petitions of 18 August 1919 and 11 August 1929, this new one came straight to the point and asked the League to end the French Mandate and proclaim Cameroun a "neutral" country, by which it meant

52. French translation of petition of 19 Dec. 1929, in file APA 10890, Cameroon Archives.

one not belonging to any other country. If the League accepted this request, said the Duala paramount chiefs, "we transfer" the "protectorate over Cameroun" to the League of Nations Assembly.

Then followed a criticism of the present situation. It said that the three different European civilisations, German, British and French, threatened confusion; that the French hampered Africans' relations with British Cameroons; that there was not enough medical staff; and that, "The tribes have been harmed by the fact of mixed marriages." Except for the obviously justified complaint of inadequate medical staff, these points are puzzling; "mixed marriages" between Africans and whites were very rare, and those between Africans of different tribes also exceptional; the petitioners may have meant that tribal solidarity was threatened by contact made possible by colonial economic changes — this would fit in with another complaint, that native customs had been observed and modernised very little and native authorities had been suspended over most of French Cameroun and turned into "arms of the administration." The latter charge was true of most of French Africa, though the fact that the Duala paramount chiefs were signing the petition showed that they were an exception. Their general point about customs seems to have been that these should be preserved through modernisation, not disregarded.

The French did keep a suspicious watch on contacts between Dualas and British Cameroons, but did not prevent them.

The petition said the Africans were kept at the lowest level in matters of justice and were harmed in their economic activities in commerce, agriculture, forestry, etc., because of "a legal assimilation in economic matters making no allowance for his (the African's) economic inability to compete with Europeans." This clearly meant that rules for starting of new businesses, plantations and timber enterprises favoured Europeans, as they probably would have done if they had been fully enforced, though they seem not to have been for plantations. The petitioners spoke of "exploitation of our riches" and added, "In general, colonial policy does not endure the idea of independence on the part of inferior races entrusted to them." They in fact recognised that they had "gone beyond the intentions of the high Assembly" in calling for "our national sovereignty."

They added, however, that they did not call for independence for the present. "Absolute independence must be the reward for our state and its development." For the time being they called for self-government under the control of the League of Nations. Several paragraphs were devoted to a suggested constitution for a sort of international colony. This is the most interesting and original part of the whole petition. It suggested a presidency and a council of government, with a representative of the League having a right to be consulted on internal legislation and dealing with foreign affairs, for which the decisions of a "deliberative council" required his approval. There were ideas about the police - "A special decision will be made

as to the language in which it will be trained" — and the churches, which were to be the Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox Churches and the Salvation Army.

No suggestions were made for elections, but it was proposed that League representatives should run the administration with the Camerounians, the former training the latter to take over completely later.

As if all this were not daring and remarkable enough, the petition referred to "the freedom to which we have a right" and said that a total rejection of its ideas "will make the uncivilised world believe that the European, who is by nature the born champion of civilisation, is directly and officially the enemy of the Africans, for freedom and justice do no harm either to the civilised nations or to anyone."

The petition was sent in the way required by the League, through the Mandatory government, and this time Cortade passed it on quickly to Marchand. The Commissioner made predictably damning comments to the Minister, saying the Dualas' claim to speak for all French Cameroun was as if Albania claimed domination over Europe, and adding his view that they were unfit for self-government and the end of French rule would mean anarchy.⁵³

After this letter, dated 28 Jan. 1930, Marchand wrote a longer one, equally fierce, a little later (it is undated). He said France's work should not be called in question because of an "expression of views as vain as it is childish, not deserving any consideration," and referred to a comment in his earlier letter that, "As far as the

Duala tribe is concerned, it is still at the stage of ritual crimes, of superstitions which, based on the existence of crocodile-men and leopard-men, provoke the use of talismans which are ridiculous when they are not dangerous to third parties."⁵³

In his 28 January letter Marchand said the petition was presumably the work of Richard Bell. It seems that police investigations were soon started along that line of suspicion. On 17 March the Commissioner told the Minister about Me. Jean-Louis' letter of 1 Dec. 1929, mentioning the lawyer's contacts with Richard Bell and with French newspapers and politicians.⁵⁴ Police also found, perhaps after March 17, letters from Richard Bell to Njembele Ekwe,⁵⁵ strengthening the suspicions of Marchand who already, on March 17, had said Richard Bell should be sent back to Douala.⁵⁴

The question of who really drew up the self-government petition will be dealt with shortly. The paramount chiefs may have done no more than sign it, while the story that the old Ngondo assembly met to approve it is incredible. It seems that a group of determined nationalists was responsible and some suggestions as to who they were will be given below.

Letters of 28 January 1930 and

53. Marchand to Minister, undated, file APA 10890, Cameroon Archives.

54. Marchand to Minister, 17 March 1930, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

55. Marchand to Minister, 22 May 1930, same Box.

Enter Vincent Ganty.

The French did not believe that even Richard Bell could produce such a document alone; Marchand said it came from him and "the German and Bolshevik influence amidst which he lives in Paris."⁵⁶ Interestingly enough, there arose at that time a small group of anti-colonial activists combining German, and Bolshevik, and Duala influences; as such it might have been expected to cause nightmares to the French in Cameroun, but it seems to have been hardly noticed. This was the Berlin section of the Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre, founded in Sept. 1929, mainly by some of the Dualas still in Germany. Victor Bell, probably the same one who was Richard Bell's brother, was chairman, and Joseph Ekwe Bile, an architect from Akwa, secretary.⁵⁷ In 1930-32 Ekwe Bile was an actual Communist and spent some time in Moscow.⁵⁸ The LDRN, under Garan Kouyate from French Sudan, was very close to the Comintern by then.⁵⁹ Yet its Berlin section, whose formation was reported to the French colonial governors in the regular circular on anti-colonial activity at the end of 1929,⁵⁷ was not thought to be linked with the Duala agitation, it seems. In fact it would probably have inspired a more revolutionary document than the one produced.

However, the LDRN is known to have had a cell in French Cameroun, not at Douala but at Kribi. The Batangas,

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- 56. Marchand to Minister, 23 Jan. 1931, file 1, Box Cameroun AP 615, Archives SOM, Paris.
 - 57. Circular on revolutionary activity, Paris, 31 Dec. 1929, file APA 10367, Cameroon Archives.
 - 58. Minister to Commissioner, 27 March 1935, file on J.E. Bile in Box Cameroun AP II 28, Archives SOM, Paris.
 - 59. E. Wilson, Russia and Black Africa before World War II, p. 231ff.

similar in many ways to their Duala cousins, were equally likely to include some political activists. It was later said that some Camerounians had contacted the LDRN and that Richard Bell had agreed with Kouyate on the formation of a business firm in Paris which would act as a secret arms buyer.⁶⁰ This is one of the less probable of the stories of plots and intrigues involving the LDRN in those years. Whatever it actually did, the Kribi section of the Ligue was founded, apparently in mid-1929, by a former colonial official from French Guiana, Vincent Ganty. He worked for the Customs in Douala before resigning in 1924; later he was active as a conjuror, masseur, hypnotist and Christian Scientist in the Kribi area, and the authorities recalled this background gladly when he went in for political activism.⁶¹

A recent study⁶¹ suggests that Ganty contacted Duala chiefs and elders when working in Douala, and later renewed contact with them after being deported from French Cameroun by Arrêté of 7 Feb. 1930, while waiting for a ship in Douala; he sailed on 20 March. As will be explained more fully below, Edinguele Meetom, possibly the leading anti-French activist in Douala then, recalled that he had drawn up a petition with others and handed it to Ganty to deliver.⁶² This is supported by another study which says that Ganty met Betote Akwa, who had returned from the north, and a secret society had then been formed including the elders and younger educated people of Akwa, with Edinguele Meetom as secretary. This study says the

60. Minister to Commissioner, Paris 28 Jan.1932, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

61. A.Owona, "La Curieuse Figure de Vincent Ganty," Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outremer, vol. LVI, no.204, 1969.

62. Interview, Ferdinand Edinguele Meetom, Douala 1972.

four paramount chiefs asked Ganty to undertake a mission to take documents and make representations to the French government and the League of Nations, on 13 March 1930.⁶³

In May 1930 a meeting of the LDRN in Paris was reported to have discussed an approach to the League being arranged by Ganty.⁶⁴ But he does not seem to have taken any such action before 1931.

The 1930 Political Trial.

More obscure than any other episode in the nationalist activity of this time is a trial that led to the imprisonment of some Duala activists a few months after the Self-Government Petition. A few scattered allusions show that the trial was held at Mbanga, not Duala, and that at least two well known nationalists, Daniel Siliki Same of Akwa and Joseph Lea Elong of Deido, were imprisoned for collecting money for political activity, perhaps among other charges.

On 28 June 1930 the Homologation Court upheld a sentence of one year's imprisonment and three years' interdiction de séjour on Lea Elong and another, of two years' imprisonment and three years' interdiction, on Mouengue Njo, for "illegal association and fraud."⁶⁵ According to the reports of the Douala Special Police Commissioner, who from May 1930 was head of the Sûreté, a

63. E. Ghomsi, "Résistance africaine à l'Impérialisme européen: le cas des Dualas du Cameroun," Afrika-Zamani no. 4, July 1975.

64. Circular on revolutionary propaganda, 30 June 1930, file APA 10367, Cameroon Archives.

65. JOC 15 April 1932.

certain Elong – almost certainly Lea Elong, a younger brother of Djombi Elong – was said to have been secretary of an association generally holding meetings at his house, and to have gone about June 1930 to the Abo region to make propaganda.⁶⁶ Johannes Sam Deido recalls⁶⁷ that Lea Elong was gaoled for collecting money in the interior for political activity. Such fund-raising in the Abo country might account for the trial being held at Mbanga, close to that country. The police officer implied that "Elong" had been sentenced at Mbanga and definitely said Siliki Same had been.⁶⁶

Marchand said in May 1930 that Richard Bell's letters to Njembele Ekwe had been found after "a" case of unauthorised native association, set up under the false pretence of dealing with native marriage."⁶⁸ It is likely that this refers to the same case, but it is not quite certain.

Cortade's report for Douala Circonscription for 1930 said that leaders of a protest movement had recently been imprisoned for "fraud" and sent to serve prison sentences at Ngaoundere; it implied that the movement had arisen from the land question and had been formed "under the impulse of some members of the Bell tribe" with the aim of "deaf opposition" and of acting as an "observer without impartiality and without indulgence" on behalf of the

66. Special Police Commissioner to Marchand, Douala 1 Aug. 1930, file APA 11202/N, Cameroon Archives.

67. Interview, Johannes Sam Deido.

68. Marchand to Minister, 22 May 1930, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

League of Nations.⁶⁹ This suggests the possibility of two groups, for Siliki Same and Lea Elong were not Bell men. But Cortade did not actually say that the people he mentioned were all Bonadoo, and they could have been Dualas of several sections united by nationalistic feelings aroused partly by the land question. This interpretation is supported by a further clue: on 23 Dec. 1930 the French newspaper L'Ami du Peuple said four Duala "Communists" had been gaoled, and named them as Daniel Siliki Same, Rudolph Doume Yondo, Eitel Jala Tiki and Kung Mounko N'jo (sic); Marchand said they were not Communists but had been imprisoned for fraud relating to the land question.⁷⁰

There seems, then, to have been a group of Duala political activists arrested and tried about May or June 1930, after setting up an association possibly dealing with the land case but more probably of a broader political outlook promoted in part by the land grievance; and they seem to have been gaoled particularly for collecting money for the cause among the Abos, related to the Dualas. From this and other indications it seems that Africans collecting money for protest activity could easily be convicted, not of sedition, but of "fraud" (escroquerie). This sounds like serious twisting of the law, but even so it seems that the French repressive action was restrained. The two known prison sentences were light by the standards of colonial

69. Douala Circonscription Annual Report 1930, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

70. Marchand to Minister, 19 Jan. 1931, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

repression; and although the full number imprisoned is not clear, it did not include all the active protest leaders. The French, however, must have been alarmed at the attempts to spread the protest message to other tribes; the Dualas were said to have tried this with the Batangas, Bakokos and Boulous.⁷¹

During the police activity against the nationalists an Arrêté of 17 May 1930 established at Douala a Service de Police Spéciale et de Sûreté Générale. It continued the work already done in Douala by the Special Police Commissioner, who became its head, but probably extended that work, which included investigation of political opposition and suspected German activities. Before long secret police activity had become a regular and disagreeable part of Douala's daily life, as it still is today.

Marchand was determined to tighten security within limits. But his superiors felt obliged to remind him what the limits were. When he made a suggestion about Richard Bell (apparently the suggestion of sending him home) the Minister said the measure was not allowed by law and added that, with the League of Nations, "We must carefully avoid seeming to try, by an authoritarian measure, to stifle the protest of a native in a case in which, anyway, the French position is perfectly defined and justified."⁷² The Minister was referring to the land case and apparently did not understand that Marchand suspected Richard Bell of more than mere agitation over that case. But his point was

71. Special Police Commissioner to Marchand, 2 Sept. 1930, file APA 11201/N, Cameroon Archives.

72. Minister to Marchand, 23 June 1930, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

clear and the letter is an important one. It is one indication that the Mandated Territory status really did restrain repression of nationalists. How far it did so is in fact uncertain. Another suggestion by Marchand, for closer control over French newspapers which circulated freely in Cameroun, was also turned down,⁷³ but this time the law invoked was probably not connected with the Mandate.

Richard Bell and Ganty.

The Mbanga trial, according to the head of the Sûreté, apparently "produced a profound impression, but without encouraging calm among those of the leaders whom the investigation was not able to unveil."⁶⁶ True enough, the "profound impression" did not lead to any weakening of the spirit of opposition.

While the Bonadoo maintained their boycott of the land offered at Bali, Me. Jean-Louis completed on 30 July 1930 his long memorandum for the defence of Lobe Bell in his case challenging the entire 1914 expropriation. A thorough study of the whole case, it dealt with Article 3 of the 1884 Treaty, contending that if the Treaty were invalid or non-existent, so was German rule in Douala, and so, therefore, was the transfer of German Kamerun to France! Jean-Louis argued at length that the expropriation had been illegal under German law. Strangely, he revived

73. Marchand to Minister, 22 July 1930, 1 August 1930, file APA 11202/N, Cameroon Archives.

the idea demolished in 1926 by Maître, that the Reichstag had halted the expropriation. He also argued, as Dualas had often done, that the text of Rudolf Bell's will showed the expropriation had not been definite by 7 August 1914. He appended the text of the will and other documents, all translated. Apart from the revival of the Reichstag story it was the most painstaking statement recorded of the Bonadoo land case.⁷⁴

Meanwhile the French government sent to the Mandates Commission, on 26 May 1930, its comments on the Self-Government Petition; they reproduced some of Marchand's comments on the Dualas' alleged backwardness.⁷⁵ The petition was not discussed at the PMC's 17th session, from 18 June to 1 July, when French Cameroun was not discussed at all.

Soon after that, as noted earlier, an official at the Ministry in Paris heard about the other, "lost" Duala petition of 11 August 1929. Somehow it was found that Cortade had it; and a puzzling sequence of events followed.

On 25 August the 101 signatures on the procuration to Richard Bell were duly certified, before it was sent with the petition to the Commissioner by Cortade on 3 Sept.⁷⁶ But on 31 August a meeting in Douala voted to give powers to Vincent Ganty to act as an intermediary between the Dualas and the League of Nations or any other

74. Jean-Louis Memorandum in file 1, Box Cameroun AP 615, Archives SOM, Paris.

75. PMC, Report of 19th Session (4-19 Nov. 1930).

76. Cortade to Marchand, 3 Sept. 1930, file 1, Box Cameroun AP 615, Archives SOM, Paris.

international authority, to conduct political propaganda for them in Europe, and to do all he thought necessary and useful to ensure the success of their claims, but without making "a definite decision on questions of principle."⁷⁷ Twenty-nine people signed this "Commission," which led Ganty to call himself later "Delegate in Europe of the Cameroun Negro Citizens."

The source for the facts about the 31 August decision⁷⁷ does not name any of the signatories except Betote Akwa. Another source⁷⁸ mentions, as already noted, that the four paramount chiefs had commissioned Ganty earlier in 1930 when he was in Douala, but that the core of activists working with him were Akwa people including Betote Akwa and Edinguele Meetom. That source does not mention the meeting of 31 August. But it may well have been organised by the same group of activists based in Akwa. The puzzling points are why a new agreement to give powers to Ganty was then needed, and why the Bonadoo and Bonaberi rulers signed either of the Ganty commissions while Richard Bell was still their representative, even when their delegation of powers to him had just been confirmed.

Later the revolutionary newspaper La Race Nègre was to say that Richard Bell had been appointed a representative by the Bonadoo and Bonaberi, Ganty by Akwa and Deido.⁷⁹ Probably something very like this happened;

77. Owona, op.cit.

78. Ghomsi, op.cit.

79. Quoted in Bleu to Cortade, Yaounde 6 Aug. 1931, file APA 10126, Cameroon Archives.

while all the four paramount chiefs signed the commissions to Ganty, the support for him was probably based in Akwa and Deido, and Richard Bell may have been retained only as a representative for the Bell land case. The confirming of the delegation of powers to Richard Bell probably led to a meeting, that of 31 August, to reassure Ganty that he too was a Duala representative as agreed earlier.

In late 1929 there had been some suspicions of Richard Bell among the Dualas.⁸⁰ He does not seem to have been very active, and when summoned to the Colonial Ministry in Paris in mid-1930 he said he was going to go home.⁸¹ Dissatisfaction with his work in France may have led his people to join other Dualas in contacting Ganty, while not repudiating the former Paramount Chief.

On 5 Sept. 1930 Richard Bell sent a petition to the League of Nations through the French prime minister.⁸² Apart from his covering letter to the prime minister the petition was simply the Jean-Louis Memorandum. While Richard Bell must have helped prepare that document his own work in three years in Paris seems meagre to judge by that petition. It looks strongly as though he took hasty action to try to show his sponsors he had not been idle.

Marchand's view that Richard Bell was the most active opposition leader and was behind the Self-Government

80. Letter to Jean-Louis to chiefs and elders of Douala, 1 Dec. 1929, enclosed with letter of Marchand to Minister, 17 March 1930, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

81. Minister to Marchand, 23 June 1930, same Box.

82. Richard Bell to French prime minister, Paris 5 Sept. 1930, file 1, Box Cameroun AP 615, Archives SOM, Paris.

Petition was probably quite wrong. It seems rather that there were two strands in the Duala nationalist movement, not hostile to each other, not wholly separate, but distinct to some extent. One was the movement to seek restoration of the lost Bonadoo land, the other was a more radical movement seeking self-government. The former produced the first petition to the League in 1929, the latter the second which called for an end to French rule. The big difference between the two petitions makes this clear enough. The Bells would naturally feel most strongly about the land. There is a good deal of evidence suggesting that the more radical Dualas were based mainly in Akwa, though Bells could well move on from their land grievance to more radical opposition to the French who were holding the stolen land, while other Dualas could mention the land question as an example of the colonialist behaviour they opposed.

The reference quoted earlier⁷⁸ to radical opposition centred in Akwa is supported by the known nationalistic attitude of Paramount Chief Ngaka Akwa, who was eventually to be sacked because of it; by the apparently similar attitude, at that time, of his brother Betote Akwa after his return from the north, when he was also the focus of anti-government feeling by other Akwas, wanting him restored to the throne; by the references to a revival about 1930 of the Baptist Church movement behind Pastor Lotin Same, based mainly among his fellow Akwa people (of this more later); and by the reminiscences of Edinguele Meetom. This active nationalist later recalled, in extreme

old age, how he and four others worked for several months on a petition in 1928, having been delegated to do this by the Ngondo, and handed it to Ganty.⁸³ Although Ngaka Akwa's nephew says he (Ngaka) was head of the Ngondo at that time,⁸⁴ it is in fact impossible that that assembly could have met then. But, just as a new form of the Ngondo was to be headed after the Second World War by Betote Akwa, so about 1929 his brother, or other Akwa people, may have formed a group using the name and claiming some of the powers of the assembly which (in Duala eyes) ceded sovereignty to Germany in 1884. This would explain the way in which the paramount chiefs spoke of an "assembly" and used the language of a sovereign body in the Self-Government Petition. Edinguele Meetom was very probably referring to that petition and to the contacts with Ganty by its authors. But his account was not very clear.

Certainly Ganty, a known left-wing activist, was representing Edinguele Meetom and other Dualas with similar ideas in late 1930. He produced no petitions then, but may have written or inspired articles in anti-colonial newspapers about French Cameroun at the time.

Dualas' Political Feelings.

The 19 December 1929 petition was briefly discussed by the Permanent Mandates Commission at its 19th session, in November 1930. The Commission was not competent to

83. Interview, Edinguele Meetom.

84. Interview, Prince Dika Akwa, Douala.

decide whether France should retain a Mandate or not; only the League itself could, in theory, have ended the French Mandate.⁸⁵

The activists who prepared that petition and those (probably among the same people) who were imprisoned in mid-1930 may not have been very numerous, but their views, in one form or another, had wide support.

Cortade said in his official report for 1930 that the Dualas were "of insubordinate disposition" and "excessively devious," though they were cautious in action and "not without discernment."⁸⁶ "In all circles," he said, "even the most disciplined, a tendency appears to argue and to discuss the principle of authority. The situation, compared with that in other colonial territories, is still satisfactory, but must be followed with great attention."⁸⁷ This confidential assessment was not fully reflected in the Annual Report to the League of Nations for 1930, but that did say, "The people of Douala, faithful to their rebellious principles, and to their aim of hegemony over all tribes of Cameroun, continue, at least in some circles which think themselves advanced, to nourish vain hopes of self-government."⁸⁸

The Protestant Mission was appalled at the combined religious and political dissidence among the Dualas. Lotin Same was actively preaching, writing hymns and rallying

85. PMC, Report of 19th session, 4-19 Nov. 1930, Geneva.

86. Douala Annual Report 1930, p. 5, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

87. *ibid.*, p. 7.

88. Annual Report 1930, p. 75.

his supporters. In 1930 a notable revival of feeling among the "Native" Baptists was reported.⁸⁹ The NBC was not actually banned, but in some not entirely clear way it lacked full freedom to operate as a church; it sought to get statutes approved, with Me. Fouletier making representations on its behalf to Marchand on 6 August, 29 August, 22 Nov., and 3 Dec. 1930.⁹⁰ The Mission may well have been right in seeing this agitation as overlapping with political radicalism, both being centred^d in Akwa. The report of the Missionary Conference in July 1930 said, "It has been especially difficult to work this year at Douala, not only because of the lack of missionaries, but also and above all because of the lack of confidence of the natives, their ill-will and their too nationalist spirit."⁹¹ The following year Rusillon wrote, "I don't see...how we could fight against a current in which there are nationalists, Communists, Germans, and all this mixed with sin."⁹²

The Mission nonetheless gave wide responsibilities to Dualas, and had forecast eventual Church self-government ten years earlier. Even the French administration talked of eventual self-government. Cortade himself, in his report for 1930, said, "The normal conclusion of the trusteeship entrusted to France will come when the people she administers have attained sufficient intellectual maturity and experience to take in hand their own destinies..."⁹³

89. Douala Annual Report 1930, p. 18 (see note 86).

90. Me. Fouletier to Marchand, 18 Sept. 1931, file APA 10572/E, Cameroon Archives.

91. Journal des Missions Evangéliques, second half of 1930, p. 203.

92. Rusillon to Allégret, 30 Sept. 1931, quoted in van Slageren, op.cit., p. 195.

93. Douala Annual Report 1930, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

But neither the government nor the Protestant Mission thought highly of those who felt such a moment had come.

One sign of widespread opposition to French rule was that the French could not easily rule through the Chiefs. Whether the four paramount chiefs signed the petitions freely or under persuasion, either way they were not acting as chiefs under French rule were supposed to. Until early 1931 they retained their posts, no doubt because the French knew they were only expressing common sentiments.

The Dualas were not all involved in the anti-colonial upsurge. Cortade thought that people educated under French rule dominated the administrative and economic positions held by Dualas, and formed "a counter-weight to the more restless class of planters, traders and property owners, who include mainly people of a different culture and more advanced age, a heritage of the past."⁹³ He was certainly wrong about the French-educated generation taking over already, though obviously more and more of them were coming to prominence and many may have lacked their fathers' anti-French militancy. But the older generation included loyal supporters of France. Cortade's idea of the class most opposed to French rule was almost certainly correct; known nationalist leaders were of that class of self-employed (often rich) Dualas of the older generation. But their independent means did not make them necessarily oppose the French; it only made it easier for them to do so. Some people of that class were pro-French.

Robert Ebolo Bile of Akwa, since 1927 a member of

The Conseil d'Administration for French Cameroun, was a pillar of the French regime. A trader and timber concessionnaire, he was awarded the Mérite Indigène on 15 July 1929, and in 1931 went to the Colonial Exhibition in Paris. Others who were thought to deserve honours from the French included Diffio Mandengue, a trader, also appointed to the Conseil d'Administration in 1927; and Samuel Dimithe, who was promoted on 23 June 1930 to the 2nd class of the Mérite Indigène, the citation saying, "has not ceased to increase his food production for several years, and contributes greatly to the feeding of the population of Douala. He is the Circonscription's contractor for supplies for the prison, the militia, the Native Guard and the road labourers. Sound state of mind; has never been involved in any political affairs."⁹⁴

Ebole Bile's sister Esther Sike Bile was married to another favourite of the French in Akwa, Kunz Kwa Moutome, a prominent figure from North Akwa (who died at an advanced age in 1977); a timber concessionnaire and trader, he received the Mérite in 1927, the citation saying that he "speaks and writes French adequately and exerts a wholesome influence on the population of Akwa."⁹⁵

Then, of course, there was Prince Alexandre Douala Manga Bell, standing aloof from all the nationalistic activity but still, probably, respected on account of his character and parentage by other Bonadoo, even his nationalistic-minded relatives.

94. JOC 1 July 1930.

95. JOC 1 Dec. 1927.

Leading families had members of varying political views; the Bell chiefly family was only one example. Ebole Bile was a brother of the Communist Ekwe Bile in Moscow. Albert Mod'a Bebe Bell, a hard-working servant of the French for forty years as a government schoolteacher, was a brother of Martin Lobe Bebe Bell, a mattress-maker who was famous as composer of the song Tet'Ekombo. He published it in 1929, with a tune by either him or Pastor Martin Itondo, another Bell man.⁹⁶ A song in memory of Rudolf Bell, it is a stirring nationalist song whose appearance can be considered an incident in the anti-colonial movement of those years. It includes a clear reference to the land question, and it refers to Europeans, not Germans.

Other Dualas never stopped their loyal work for the French in the African civil service. Max Mpacko, a government schoolteacher, was given the *Mérite* in 1929 as a "servant of the first hour," and attended the Colonial Exhibition.⁹⁷ But Isaac Moume Etia, although steadily promoted, had difficulties with his superiors. He was roughly treated by a policeman on one occasion,⁹⁸ and this may have led to an unexplained offer of resignation, withdrawn also without explanation, in 1930.⁹⁹ Early in 1931, back in Douala after a posting to Kribi, he was watched by police agents who seem to have read some of his mail. At the end of 1931 he was said to have been trusted with

96. M. Doume^b-Moulongo, "Tet'Ekombo," in Abbia, Yaounde, special issue, no. 17-18, September 1967.

97. La Gazette du Cameroun, no. 79, 15 Dec. 1931.

98. Interview, Léopold Moume Etia, Douala.

99. Arrêtes 21 Oct. 1930, 5 Nov. 1930.

watching fellow Africans' intrigues and reporting on them, but to have failed to do so; while at a meeting at his house about April 1931 he was said to have declared, in substance, that France was to blame for the Slump but the French would soon leave and the Germans would be back.¹⁰⁰

The Sûreté concluded that Moume Etia was now open to all sorts of propaganda, including German and British.¹⁰⁰ The truth was probably that clerks like him shared the general feelings of Dualas, including resentment at the Slump (of which more shortly). The position of the clerk, caught between an anti-colonial population and a suspicious colonial power, was typical of the Dualas' general two-edged attitude to their rulers. The chiefs' position was similar. The general attitude makes it easy to believe allegations that some leaders of the protest activity also passed information on it to the French; it was one way of keeping a foot in both camps, and if Moume Etia refused to act as a spy others may not have done. But there is no proof. What is fairly certain is that some protest leaders got off the anti-colonial bandwagon at various times — Mandessi Bell perhaps as early as 1928, and later Lobe Bell, his brother Mudute Bell, and Erdmann Eteki, the Deido businessman who was Richard Bell's brother-in-law.

However, among the Dualas categories were blurred. Prince Alexandre was to show that he could make trouble for

100. Special Police Commissioner, Douala, to Marchand, 3 Dec. 1931, file APA 11202/N, Cameroon Archives.

the French whom he so flattered. In 1931 Ebole Bile himself proposed putting the deeply felt question of "the police and the Indigénat" on the agenda of a Conseil de Notables meeting for Douala Circonscription.¹⁰¹

Perhaps because such people were nonetheless very loyal, the French, though against self-government for Africans, was ready to grant more participation by then, in principle. Cortade's views expressed in 1930 were not exceptional. In a letter to the Minister, enclosing the 1930 Annual Report, Marchand said:

"That our natives should have their vision obscured by what they see in the press, and should ask to administer themselves, is scarcely surprising; so it is essential to give them a bigger place in the institutions for running affairs at the local level." ¹⁰² For this reason and because of the deficiencies of the Chamber of Commerce, he said, he had proposed an Economic, Financial and Social Council on the lines of that in French Togo.¹⁰²

The idea was not pursued. Marchand himself hardly helped it by prefacing his suggestion with typical remarks about the Dualas' "childish spirit of criticism," outside influences, Black Communist agents and "coffee-coloured lawyers." In fact the only elections of African representatives that had been allowed had been ended at the latest by 1932, when an Arrêté reorganising the Chamber of Commerce made the African membership appointive rather than elective.¹⁰³

101. Gouellain, Douala, p. 243.

102. Marchand to Minister, undated but in 1931, file APA 10038, Cameroon Archives.

103. JOC 1 May 1932, Arrêté 19 April 1932.

Dismissal of Ngaka Akwa; return of Betote Akwa.

Hans Ngaka Akwa was dismissed as Paramount Chief of Akwa about the beginning of 1931. The dismissal was not gazetted but it was probably not long before the appointment of his successor, gazetted in the Journal Officiel of 15 March. The choice of the successor was as momentous as the removal of Ngaka; it was his brother Betote Akwa, restored after his dismissal and imprisonment some years before. After his return from the north a strong movement had started to have him restored. Now the French restored him after removing his brother, who was a nationalist¹⁰⁴ and was reported to be still showing hostility to France months after his dismissal.¹⁰⁵

On 25 January 1931 yet another "Protocol" giving powers to Vincent Ganty was signed by various leading Dualas. According to Ghoms¹⁰⁶ they included both Ngaka Akwa and Betote Akwa. It is not clear whether the dismissal of Ngaka came before or after this, but if it was after it cannot have been because of it, for Betote was then appointed; Ghoms's account says Betote was a nationalist like his brother, at least initially. The same account says, however, that he later became a double agent,¹⁰⁶ a charge unprovable concerning him and others so accused. Whether the French had any reasons for supposing that the outwardly surprising appointment of

104. L. Moume Etia, Sites Historiques de Douala vol.2, p.26; interview, Dika Akwa.

105. Special Police Commissioner, Douala, to Marchand, 13 Aug. 1931, file APA 11202/N, Cameroon Archives.

106. Ghoms, op.cit.

Betote Akwa would serve their interests, he was destined to become one of the outstanding paramount chiefs in Douala, reigning continually after 1931 for 45 years, until his death on 4 Sept. 1976.

The new "protocol" to Ganty was signed by 27 people in all, including the four paramount chiefs (Ngaka Akwa or Betote Akwa, Lobe Bell, Eyoum Ekwalla, Mbappe Bwanga), and Mudute Bell and Ntepe Priso of the Bonadoo. It was drawn up in French and Duala and included provision for a subsidy of 4,000 francs per month for "expenses and risks."¹⁰⁷ This indicates a possible reason for yet another document being thought necessary.

That all four paramount chiefs agreed again on Ganty as their delegate is not surprising as Richard Bell seems to have left Paris in late 1930 or early 1931,¹⁰⁸ about the same time as Mbale ceased production.¹⁰⁹ Richard Bell went to Germany, leaving Ganty as the only recorded representative of Duala political activists in Paris, where, however, he still delayed taking action in the cause of Cameroun self-government.

The Women's Anti-Tax Demonstration.

In the first half of 1931 the Slump grew spectacularly worse. The Duala planters growing cocoa and palm products were severely hit. The blow must have been felt most by the time of the new cocoa crop in mid-year.

107. *ibid.*, and Owona, *op.cit.*

108. Information from Joseph Ebele, René Douala Manga Bell papers.

109. Interview, Kingue Jong.

The collapse of the boycott of the land at Bali by the expropriated Bonadoo came then, and most probably, as Gouellain¹¹⁰ argues, the collapse of prices of Duala plantation products helped to produce this. The offer of free land and money for house building, bravely resisted for two years, must have become irresistible when the plantation income fell so sharply. But it was available, of course, only to one "Canton" of the Dualas.

The Slump may well have helped to provoke another incident in the protest activity. In July 1931 thousands of women in Douala demonstrated against the head-tax. Their action, like the Self-Government Petition, deserves to be better recorded than it has been in the history of early nationalism in Africa. It was the culmination of a movement built up over several months.

The protest was sparked off by the application of the head-tax to all African women in 1931. Previously many mothers had been exempt, and the number of women paying had thus been much reduced. In 1930 the head-tax for women in Douala Circonscription was raised by five francs, but the exemption of mothers of young children continued; at the same time the men's head-tax remained unchanged. According to the head of the Finance Department of French Cameroun, the old rate "no longer corresponds to the fiscal capacities of the natives";¹¹¹ this seems to have meant that women, but not men, could be made to pay more! That must have been irksome enough, but then it

110. Gouellain, op.cit., p. 230.

111. Report of Conseil d'Administration meeting of 6 July 1930, Yaounde, Box Cameroun AP II 28, Archives SOM, Paris.

was decided to end in 1931 the tax exemption for mothers of children under twelve in Douala, Abong-Mbang, Batouri and Yokadouma Circonscriptions.¹¹² The explanation given in the Annual Report for 1930 was a repetition, in a major official document, of one of the cruder myths believed by whites in Africa; the exemption had been granted to encourage a higher birth rate, but had not been necessary, for in African society, "a child, above all if it is a girl, is not a charge on the family."¹¹²

In 1931 a new graded income tax was instituted.¹¹² Many Duala men thus paid more than the previous uniform rate. That rate, now the minimum, was then raised to 37 francs per year, and all women had to pay that sum.¹¹³

A group of women sent a protest letter to the Commissioner on 31 January 1931¹¹⁴. There was an organisation of women behind the agitation which now began; apparently unknown to the authorities at the time, it was described much later to Léopold Moume Etia by some of the leaders, including Madame Iteki a Dika, a sister of Ngaka and Betote Akwa.¹¹⁵ She kept a photograph of herself and seven other members of the women's "steering committee," including also Johanna Isad'a Mbappe Bwanga, daughter of the Paramount Chief of Bonaberi. Another leader was Mme. Ewoudou Jemba, wife of the Deido elder and protest leader Jemba Muduru; she, curiously, did not name Mme. Iteki a Dika among her colleagues. She said she had

112. Annual Report 1931, p. 43.

113. Cortade to Commissioner, 27 July 1931, file APA 11217/B, Cameroon Archives.

114. Bleu to Cortade, cable, Yaounde, undated, same file.

115. L. Moume Etia, Nyango Mangoule ma Deido, unpublished MS, read in Douala 13 May 1972.

been Deido district chairman of a women's anti-tax protest organisation which, she said, stretched from Douala to Nkongsamba, Edea and Yabassi.¹¹⁵ If the organisation was possibly quite not so extensive as that, it was certainly strong in Douala.

Mme. Jemba said the head-tax on all women was opposed because it had not been imposed in the German period and was not now imposed on Lagosian, "Popo" (Dahomean and Togolese) and Senegalese women;* also because the women of Douala could not pay. Cortade, who was absent for some months of the agitation but had returned before the climax in July, made a particularly inane comment on the claim by Duala men that their women were refusing to pay tax: "...this pretext is totally nonsensical, because men do not recognise, in Douala any more than in other negro countries, the right of women to have an opinion."¹¹³

Different stories of a messenger taking a petition from the women are recorded; probably Mme. Emma Mbappou, another of the leaders, was correct in recalling that an Akwa man, Meetom, was the messenger,¹¹⁵ for it sounds typical of Edinguele Meetom. But the date of that petition (was it that of 31 January or another?) and other facts about it are obscure.

As the chiefs were being slow to bring in the head-tax Cortade, soon after resuming duty, called them together

* If this was correct it must have been because there was no tax on women in their home colonies.

on 15 June and gave them a final warning; then he summoned them one by one to see to the collection of the tax, starting with Bonaberi, which he said was, with Bali, a centre of resistance to "all orders from the administration." Mbappe Bwanga came on 16 July with some district chiefs of Bonaberi, but failed to account for some tax tokens and was arrested on the spot for embezzlement. Two days later he was taken to the Second-Degree Court * for trial. The old Paramount Chief received a three-month gaol sentence.¹¹³

His arrest seems to have been a signal for action by the militant women.¹¹⁶ It was perhaps then that they organised a big meeting outside the Circonscription office to present grievances; Mme. Jemba recalled later that Cortade had said they must pay the head-tax and militiamen had dispersed the meeting, but that the women held many more meetings, using minor tracks, regularly used to avoid tax checks, to assemble. According to Mme. Jemba Cortade asked the Paramount Chiefs for the names of the leaders of the women's movement, and she and six others were arrested. Cortade's account confirms that there were some arrests then, which fits in oddly with his belief that the women's protest movement was an invention of their menfolk.¹¹³ Johanna Mbappe was arrested on 21 July. About 500 Bonaberi and Bonasama women surrounded the police station at Bonaberi within an hour, some waving sticks, to call for her release; the officer in charge arrested some, and

* One of two new courts created in 1927 (see below).

116. Cortade to Commissioner, 27 July 1931, file APA 11217/B, Cameroon Archives; Moume Etia, op.cit.

then called on the leaders to give themselves up, but could not arrest the four who did so because he had only two policemen with him.¹¹⁷

The climax came the next day, 22 July 1931. A big demonstration by women was held in Bali; police arrested the leaders, taking three to New-Bell prison, but did not break up the gathering.¹¹³ Meanwhile a number of other women set out from Deido to protest outside the Circonscription office at Bonanjo (about an hour's brisk walk). They followed the main road this time. At a point near Bonakwamwang (Akwa), where the road passed the police station, militiamen were waiting for them. An Assistant Police Commissioner, Gendarme Thiebaud, opened fire, hitting several women of whom one, Agnès Bupungo, spent ten days in hospital.¹¹⁸

The echoes of this shooting were to spread far. The physical injuries were not very serious (this was no Iva Valley or Sharpeville), but the women's reaction was naturally fierce. They promptly sent a cable to the Commissioner, in Duala, briefly reporting what had happened and asking for a reply to this protest and also to their demand for a reduction of the tax.¹¹⁹ Thiebaud was sentenced on 31 August to ten days' imprisonment and a 100 francs fine, but extenuating circumstances were found and the sentence was suspended.¹²⁰ By then a number of women who had been arrested had been released,

117. Gendarme Landry to Cortade, 22 July 1931, file APA 11217/B, Cameroon Archives.

118. Permanent Mandates Commission, report of 22nd session (3 Nov.-6 Dec. 1932), p. 350-1.

119. Bleu to Cortade, undated cable, Yaounde, file APA 11217/B, Cameroon Archives.

120. Bleu to Ministry, undated cable, Yaounde, same file.

apparently after a fortnight in New-Bell gaol. Mme. Jemba recalled in detail, thirty years later, the big celebrations after the leaders' release.¹¹⁵

Mme. Jemba mentioned European sympathisers with the women, and the Sûreté said they had foreign supporters.¹²¹ Particularly suspected on that occasion, and later, was André Dossou, a Dahomean working at the cable station; he was said to have sent cables about the demonstrations without keeping copies.¹²² Among the Africans of Douala anti-French feelings in the latter part of 1931 were reported to be more intense than ever. The Sûreté reports mentioning this are suspect on details, being based on spies' reports, but there is no reason to doubt the reports of strong feelings which the Slump and the women's demonstrations and the shooting must have inflamed, and some details are credible, such as the reported smuggling in of revolutionary newspapers like La Race Nègre.¹²³

For all the sympathies aroused, and publicity which went as far as the Mandates Commission, the women's protest failed in its aim. After the shooting incident Cortade said it would be a political error to retreat or make concessions after this "deplorable incident."¹²⁴ M. Bleu, standing in for Marchand as he often did in the Commissioner's absence, agreed and approved measures for completing the tax collection, without which, he said,

121. Special Police Commissioner, Douala, to Commissioner, 7 Sept. 1931, file APA 11201/N, Cameroon Archives.

122. Commissioner to Minister, 27 July 1933, Box Cameroun AP II 23, Archives SOM, Paris.

123. Special Police Commissioner to Marchand, 13 Aug. 1931, file APA 11201/N, Cameroon Archives. (Letters to the Commissioner, Marchand, at this time were obviously in fact handled by M. Bleu, Acting Commissioner).

124. Cortade to Marchand, 22 July 1931, file APA 11217/B, Cameroon Archives.

there should be no measures of clemency towards the women.¹²⁵

The Ganty Petitions, the LDRN Petition and the French Reaction.

Vincent Ganty sent a petition to the League of Nations on 18 or 19 May 1931, another on 19 June, possibly another on 31 July, certainly another on 14 August.¹²⁶ There are some doubts about his actions because of differing accounts. But this certainly was a busy time for the campaigner from French Guiana; the Ligue de Défense de la Race Nègre, with which he was linked, sent a petition to the League of Nations on 5 August, about the women's demonstrations and the shooting. Ganty seems to have been an eccentric and perhaps unbalanced character, and he took a long time to do anything, but then he had this spurt of activity.

The accounts by Owona and Ghoms¹²⁶ agree that he sent an important petition on 19 June, whose text Owona reproduces.¹²⁷ It called for self-government and the end of the Mandate, and made a well-researched and well-presented series of criticisms of French rule. It spoke of forced labour (e.g. on the new Edea-Kribi road), forcible food deliveries, low pay on European plantations (a franc for a twelve-hour day) and abusive treatment of labourers there, and the case of Betote Akwa, whose conviction Ganty said was unjust.

125. Bleu to Cortade, apparently dated 1 August 1931, same file.

126. Owona, op.cit.; Ghoms, op.cit.

127. Owona, op.cit., p. 214ff.

Much of the petition concerned other areas than Douala. The radical anti-colonialists in Douala who sponsored and paid Ganty may well have agreed to turn attention to other areas besides their own, but they may not have won much support outside Douala apart from Kribi, though there had been the efforts – almost certainly by the same group – to seek funds and support in other areas in 1930, and on the land case, at least, the chief of the immigrant Bassas in Douala, Thomas Umatimbehe, appeared in 1931 to be offering support. Generally the French had a tight grip on the inland tribes, through the Paramount Chief Charles Atangana in the case of the Betis. He and other Beti chiefs wrote to the President of the League of Nations on 3 April 1931 protesting at the Dualas' Self-Government Petition, saying, "We are not of the same tribe as the natives of Douala" and it would be necessary to wait two or three generations before Cameroun was ready for self-government.¹²⁸ However unrepresentative this protest at the Dualas' petition being unrepresentative was, with the help of rulers like Atangana the French probably confined nationalist activity largely to the coast.

In his petition of 19 June Ganty referred to an earlier one of 18 May, probably the same one whose date is given by Ghomsi¹²⁹ as 19 May. He may or may not have sent a petition on 31 July¹³⁰. On 14 August he sent one about the shooting of the women demonstrators and the

128. Petition of Yaounde and Bane chiefs to League of Nations, 3 April 1931, file APA 10890, Cameroon Archives.

129. Ghomsi, op.cit.

130. There is an obscure allusion in Owona, op.cit., p.208.

Betote Akwa case.¹³¹ Thus he referred twice to the case of Betote Akwa, even though the formerly imprisoned Akwa ruler had been not only freed but reinstated. Possibly Betote was not satisfied because the French considered his restoration an act of clemency not involving any doubts about the correctness of his conviction. According to Ghomsi¹²⁹ Betote continued the link with Ganty and as late as 8 February 1932 was entrusted with contacts by a secret meeting, but played a double game with Ganty and the government.

The LDRN took up the cause of the women of Douala in their anti-tax protest in a petition on 5 August 1931. If this was mainly Ganty's work he eventually produced four protest petitions in all. This activity and its connection with the far-left anti-colonial groups, and the aroused state of feeling in Douala, may have provoked the French into action there. At any rate there seems to have been a "crackdown" following the Ganty moves.

Eyoum Ekwalla, Paramount Chief of Deido, spent some time in prison for his connection with Ganty. It is not clear when, for he was said to have made an anti-French speech on 9 August 1931¹³², but only three weeks later, on 31 August, Cortade said he was just out of prison, where he had gone for the affaire Ganty.¹³³ No further details are given and it is hard to see why only Eyoum Ekwalla was

131. Owona, op.cit.

132. Special Police Commissioner to Marchand, 13 Aug. 1931, File APA 11201/N, Cameroon Archives.

133. Cortade to Commissioner, 31 August 1931, file APA 11217EB, Cameroon Archives.

arrested for this, out of the four paramount chiefs. But it seems that the police also decided to arrest Edinguele Meetom. The latter recalls that they came for him, because of his link with a Ganty petition, in the latter part of 1931,¹³⁴ which fits in with recorded facts. However, he was hidden by supporters for two and a half years.

On 29 September Marchand sent a point-by-point reply to the Ganty petition of 19 June 1931.¹³⁵ This was necessary for the PMC, but it did not preclude action against Ganty, and in November Marchand was to tell the Commission that judicial proceedings had been opened concerning subscription cards for Ganty.¹³⁶ But there is no evidence that Ganty was brought to trial in France.

The Collapse of Protest Activity.

Me. Jean-Louis revisited Douala in September 1931. The government had shown indulgence to Lobe Bell by giving him repeated extensions of the deadline for preparing his case before the Conseil du Contentieux, so it was not surprising that they let his counsel visit Douala; but he was watched while there. He saw not only Duala chiefs but those of the Strangers in New-Bell, one of whom, Umatimbehe, was reported to be collecting money

134. Interview, Edinguele Meetom.

135. Owona, op.cit., p. 223, quoting Cameroon Archives document.

136. PMC, report of 21st session (26 Oct.-13 Nov. 1931), p.143.

for an unnamed important person in Bali.¹³⁷ The possibility of Strangers in Douala backing Duala protests cannot have pleased the French, but they need not have worried. Soon the Duala protests had died away.

Jean-Louis said when leaving that he would be back in November. If he did return then he would probably have seen that the land case was hopeless. Lobe Bell's case before the Conseil du Contentieux was being undermined by the collapse of the boycott of the Bali land allocation. When this happened is not clear, but an indication is that on 17 August 1931 Mudute Bell, Lobe Bell's brother and a champion of the cause for years, was granted a 2,000 francs building bonus for his plot at Bali, no. 273.¹³⁸ His brother's attitude may well have influenced that of the Bells in general. On 31 August Cortade said that Lobe Bell had been a champion of resistance but had said nothing during the trial of Mbappe Bwanga and had then been humiliated by being forced to secure collection of the Bonadoo people's head-tax; then he had retired to his plantations.¹³⁹ He did not literally retire, but it is likely that he wanted to hide from the humiliation of having to climb down. He may, as Cortade implied, have been intimidated by the example made of his fellow Paramount Chief. The women's leader Emma Mbappou even said that Lobe Bell had delayed the release of imprisoned Bell women after the

137. Special Police Commissioner to Marchand, 5 Oct. 1931, file APA 11201/N, Cammeroon Archives.

138. JOC 1 Sept. 1931.

139. Cortade to Commissioner, 31 August 1931, file APA 11217/B, Cameroon Archives.

22 July incident.¹⁴⁰ The apparent capitulation of Lobe Bell was part of a general collapse of the protest activity. If it did not follow the abandonment of the boycott of the Bali land, it must have encouraged this.

By the time of the Permanent Mandates Commission's 21st session, from Oct. 26 to Nov. 13 1931, Marchand, present in person, was able to say that forty people had accepted plots of land at Bali. This was in the course of discussion of the two Duala land petitions which had finally come before the Commission: that of 11 August 1929, and Richard Bell's of 5 Sept. 1930. The French made a simple and clever use of Lobe Bell's case to answer the petitions; they said the case was sub judice and could not be discussed, and the PMC agreed.¹⁴¹ There was some discussion on certain aspects, but if the Bonadoo heard about this they must have been confirmed in the view that their case was hopeless. Towards the end of 1931 applications for Bali land were flooding in to the special commission dealing with the allocation, and by the year's end 182 plots had been allocated out of 330 applied for.¹⁴²

This mass surrender over the land seems to have coincided roughly with the return of Richard Bell. He had fallen ill with tuberculosis in Germany in 1931; the French authorities said then that they would watch out for any subscription "with the character of an imposition" to meet his request for medical fees.¹⁴³ In late 1931 or early 1932,

140. Moume Etia, op.cit.

141. PMC, Report of 21st session, Geneva.

142. Annual Report 1931, p. 50.

143. Acting Chef de Circonscription, Douala, to Marchand, 3 June 1931, Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

it seems, he returned to Douala via Paris. Within a few months he was dead, perhaps from his tuberculosis. His years in Europe had achieved little or nothing and he lived to see his people accept defeat.

Besides the Bonadoo land petitions the PMC's 21st session dealt with that sent by Ganty on 19 June. It dismissed this after little discussion.¹⁴¹ Marchand said 100,000 francs had been raised in Douala for activities like Ganty's. The French must have lost no opportunity of telling the Dualas that such fund-raising had achieved nothing, and the worsening Depression and a sense of frustration may well have reduced the flow of money by 1931, though Cortade said in July 1931 that the money said to be unavailable for tax payment was "always found when there is a question of collections for Richard Bell or Ganty,"¹⁴⁴ and money may have been sent for some time afterwards to Ganty, with whom contacts were maintained by a new agreement in February 1932.

All the signs are, however, that the active anti-colonial movement in Douala had died down by 1932. The Slump, besides possibly discouraging fund-raising for the cause, may have been decisive in ending the boycott of the Bali land, which was offered with hard cash that must have been especially welcome at that time to the Dualas — only a section of the whole tribe, of course — who were eligible for it. The Slump may also have turned people's attention to bread-and-butter questions and so taken their minds off political protests to some extent. Repression

144. Cortade to Commissioner, 27 July 1931, file APA 11217/B, Cameroon Archives.

was not a major cause of the collapse of protest, though the dismissal of Ngaka Akwa and the effective intimidation of Lobe Bell must have had effects. There is no need to seek any other cause for the collapse than simple frustration at hopeless activity. The protesters came up against a firm brick wall and could do nothing more.

In 1932-33 the Commissioner and the Chef de Circonscription who had been dealing with Douala's affairs for several years, including the peak protest years, both left, after serving much longer terms than other holders of those posts in the Mandate period. Théodore Marchand left in June 1932¹⁴⁵ after nine years as Commissioner for French Cameroun; even then he was said to be going only on convalescence leave, but he did not return, and in September 1932 he was replaced by Auguste-François Bonnacarrère, who had been Acting Commissioner for Cameroun in 1920-21 and later, for many years, Commissioner for French Togo.

Cortade was replaced on 2 March 1933 by the Administrateur-en-Chef Jean Michel, who was soon afterwards appointed the Commissioner's Delegate also, when that post was revived after being abolished for a time.¹⁴⁶

254 plots at Bali had been allocated to the expropriated Bonadoo property owners by the end of 1932.¹⁴⁷ Some problems apparently arose, for an additional plan for

145. JOC 15 June 1932.

146. JOC 15 March 1933, 1 May 1933.

147. Douala Circonscription Annual Report 1932, file APA 11757, Cameroon Archives.

distribution of the land was approved on 18 March 1932 following requests by the Bonanjo, Bonapriso and Bonadouma people on 30 October 1931.¹⁴⁸ But such things did not reduce the importance of the re-migration of the expropriated Bell people to their new homes at Bali. This was largely complete by the time of the final rejection of the case brought by Lobe Bell before the Conseil du Contentieux du Cameroun Français.

On 30 October 1932 the Minister of the Colonies sent a telegram to Bonnacarrère telling him to report urgently on the case so that information could be ready for the Mandates Commission's 22nd session, due to start on 3 Nov. Bonnacarrère replied on Nov. 18, saying that the Conseil had rejected Lobe Bell's case on the 16th.¹⁴⁹ Essentially the case, which challenged the right of the government to treat parts of Bali as Domaine land which it could alienate, questioned the claim that the land expropriated in 1914 had legally become French Domaine land. From a strict legal viewpoint the court may have been right to reject the Paramount Chief's case. Anyway it had been undermined by his people's rush to take up the offer of land at Bali.

The Annual Report for 1931 had referred to "a certain agitation among the Dualas," adding that the people dreaming of autonomy or rule over other Camerounians were sometimes linked with outside organisations "which have not hesitated to stir up trouble elsewhere for

148. JOC 1 April 1932.

149. Minister to Commissioner, 30 Oct. 1932 (telegram); Commissioner Bonnacarrère to Minister, 18 Nov. 1932; Box Cameroun AP 615, file 1, Archives SOM, Paris.

the satisfaction of personal ambitions."¹⁵⁰ At the PMC's 22nd session Lugard asked about this and Marchand, representing France though he was no longer Commissioner, repeated the line that some Dualas aimed at hegemony over all Cameroun and believed they had a divine mission. The same meeting discussed the LDRN petition on the shooting of the women anti-tax protesters, and a report was somewhat critical of the French authorities.¹⁵¹

Planters, businessmen and the Slump.

While fighting their losing battle with the colonial power the Dualas took part, in the ways described in Chapter Three, in the economic activity centred on their city, which expanded steadily until 1927-28 with the growth of trade through Douala's harbour.

Work began in 1926 on extensive additions to the harbour, which had remained much as the Germans had left it. By mid-1928 the contractor, the Compagnie Générale des Colonies, was well on the way to completing an 80-metre quay for berthing of ocean steamers of up to 6.50 metres draught; a 190-metre barge quay, 70 metres of it reinforced to take the weight of ten-ton cranes; yards behind the docks covering 30,000 square metres, 1,800 of them covered; a Boulevard Maritime 1,500 metres long; and dredging of the channel to allow all West Coast ships to dock at Douala.¹⁵²

150. Annual Report 1931, p. 26.

151. PMC, report of 22nd session (3 Nov.-6 Dec.1932), Geneva, pp.214, 221-2, 299, 350-1.

152. Report by M. Demartini, head of Harbour department, Douala. 14 Dec. 1927, file APA 10031, Cameroon Archives.

In a letter published in La Gazette du Cameroun one clerk, Isaac Benthia, told another, Toco Moume, about the work in progress on the port in the latter part of 1927: a "magnificent sight," with the dredger Brabant depositing sand from the bed of the Wouri on the bank at Bonamikengue (Akwa)¹⁵³. The Protestant missionary Elie Robert was even more enthusiastic when writing a year later: "Five years ago, I had been painfully impressed by the abandoned state in which the port appeared to have been left. Today, what a change! The port is well on the way to becoming one of the finest on the coast."¹⁵⁴ He mentioned the big goods yard, next to concrete wharves, near Akwa, "in place of the infected ooze which lay exposed by the low tide."

The Wouri at Douala was a busy stretch of water. The ships regularly there were the old Haoussa and Foullah, used for connections with ships that had to anchor at Suellaba roads; and a number of tugs, launches, barges, dredgers and other craft owned by the government. Small craft were also owned by companies such as (in 1928) John Holt, CFAO, Woermann Linie and Chargeurs Réunis.¹⁵⁵ In the 1930s Woermann was to run almost all barges, tugs and other small craft in the harbour and the surrounding rivers and creeks.¹⁵⁶

For the harbour's trade it made an important difference when, after years of hard work fatal for many of the labourers, the Central Railway eventually reached

153. La Gazette du Cameroun July-Oct. 1927.

154. JME 1928, p. 689.

155. JOC 15 May 1928. The firms were allowed to have these boats for manutentions fluviales probably not confined to the Wouri estuary.

156. Chamber of Commerce Bulletin, no. 80, Feb. 1936.

Yaounde, and the completed line was formally opened on 12 March 1927. The first train to steam into Yaounde station set the pattern for later trains on that line by arriving two and a half hours late, at 6.30 p.m. As a symbol of the importance of the line for Douala business a toast at the official banquet was proposed by Eteki.¹⁵⁷ Firms used the completed line extensively as well as the government, though for Duala planters the Northern Railway remained more important. In the Yaounde area cocoa production was rapidly expanding in the 1920s (eventually it eclipsed the Duala planters' production). The line was also to be important for timber, though that was mainly after the completion of the branch line to Mbalmayo in 1933. Imported goods could now reach Yaounde, a centre of high consumption, more easily and cheaply. The railway may not immediately have had much effect on migration to Douala, as illegal migration by rail could be prevented to a considerable extent.

Dualas benefited from the boom of the 1920s mainly as planters, but naturally it also benefited the Duala businessmen: Mandessi Bell, with his Import-Export firm and his Bojongo sawmill; Eteki; Sam Deido, who died on 27 Sept. 1927;¹⁵⁸ Samuel Moundo Esoukan, Nseke Diboti and others. They and other Dualas were inevitably affected by the Great Depression.

After 1929 Camerounians went on for years producing

157. La Gazette du Cameroun no. 39, Jan.-March 1927.

158. Johannes Sam Deido papers.

more and more cocoa and palm kernels, getting steadily less for each ton. For a time total cash value of these exports was maintained by increased production. But the increased tonnage may not have been spread evenly among the farmers, of whom many must have begun losing money early on because of the falling prices for products whose production they could not increase enough. For palm oil total exported production was already down in 1930, and the price was falling more for that export than for the other two. In 1928 the major firms made a price agreement for cocoa and palm oil.¹⁵⁹ By 1930, although their exact share in production is not recorded, Duala planters were feeling the effects of reduced income from plantations. In 1931 things grew much worse for them.

Although this is certain enough, and although the sharp fall in income from their plantations must have encouraged the Bell Dualas to take up the land and building money offered at Bali as Gouellain argues,¹⁶⁰ the same author overstates the effect of the Slump and is certainly wrong in talking of a general "return" of Dualas to the town.¹⁶¹ Dualas had never left the town; even those who spent most of the time on their plantations, like Kala-Lobe's "Mun'a Moto,"¹⁶² had houses in the town; they sent their children to school there. The majority spent a good deal of time in the town. Some Bell people may have converted to a wholly urban existence after the reduction of their plantation income, aided by the Bali land, but

159. F. Pedler, The Lion and the Unicorn in Africa, p. 156.

160. Gouellain, op.cit., p. 230.

161. ibid., p. 231.

162. Kala-Lobe, op.cit.; see page 191, Chapter Three.

people of Akwa, Deido and Bonaberi had no such help if they wished to do the same, and it is not apparent that any appreciable number of Dualas with plantations gave them up then. Dualas of the generation concerned remember clearly the date when their plantations collapsed; it was 1940. Before then they recall hardship due to the behaviour of European planters, including forcible conscription of planters and their labourers for work on the white men's plantations, with the connivance or active help of the administration.¹⁶³ Kala-Lobe also describes this, but gives no dates for this or other episodes. Probably such practices, though they had happened before, became common in the 1930s, for it was only then that European plantations of coffee and bananas expanded noticeably in the Mungo valley where Dualas also had plantations. When not harassed in this way Duala planters seem to have kept going in the Depression or quickly started up again.

Even when cocoa became unprofitable to grow palm oil and kernels had their home and local uses, and probably growing of food crops was unaffected. Import statistics show that imports of cloth and clothing hardly declined, so Africans' purchasing power may not have been greatly affected.¹⁶⁴ That it did fall, even though the Slump worked both ways and reduced the prices of imports, is suggested by the reduced imports of rice (2,108 tons in 1930, 748 in

163. Interviews, Albert Mod'a Bebe Bell, Betote Akwa and others.

164. Trade figures in Annual Reports 1930, p. 62; 1932, p.24; 1933, p.75ff; 1934, p. 114.

1933) and dried fish (1,765 tons in 1930, 668 in 1933). But Douala had local fish as a substitute for stockfish, and for all imports the fall was probably less in Douala than in interior regions where land transport costs affected prices.

Produce prices were already falling in 1928, when the cocoa price fell by half. Even in 1927 Africans' purchases from the firms were falling.¹⁶⁵ The continued decline affected the firms as well as the Douala planters. The European firms were said to be vulnerable because of their large number; 14 new import-export establishments were started in 1927, by entrepreneurs unaware that the boom was levelling off just then.¹⁶⁵ In 1928, however, the main produce buying firms made a "pool" agreement for palm kernels, and a price fixing agreement for palm oil and cocoa.¹⁶⁶ The effects of this combination must have been enhanced by the inclusion of King and Hatton & Cookson, two leading firms, in the new United Africa Co. in 1929; King, which ran all UAC operations in Douala, had a large share of the market now. Clearly the producers suffered by the combination, though details are lacking. They must also have been hit by the firms' agreement to stop cash advances for produce buying; credit continued for sales of imported goods.¹⁶⁷

The smaller expatriate firms were already hard hit by 1929¹⁶⁸ and by 1935 only 19 of the 38 import-export firms survived, with 8 of the 14 handling imports only and

165. Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p. 217.

166. Pedler, *loc.cit.*

167. *ibid.* But the Douala Annual Report for 1929 (p.49; in file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives) said all importing firms had stopped credit except PZ.

168. Chamber of Commerce Bulletin, Douala, no.29, reporting 3 Nov. 1929 session.

10 of the 14 handling exports only.¹⁶⁹ Some firms suffered less than others, and some were even able to buy property in Douala in the Slump years, but most had to retrench. Many European timber concessionnaires were ruined, and some planters,¹⁷⁰ though curiously the expansion of European coffee and banana plantations began about 1930.

The Chamber of Commerce began publishing its regular Bulletin in 1927, in time for this to be a good source of information on the Slump. Although it had its few African members it was a body mainly representing European interests. These coincided with African ones only rarely, as when in 1932 the Chamber protested about African taxes (reducing purchasing power) to the visiting Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies, Blaise Diagne.¹⁷¹ Cortade himself had shown awareness of the burden of the head-tax on Africans, especially after the ending of the partial exemption of women. Speaking after the women's demonstrations, he said the tax of 37 francs per year was no hardship for men or women in general, but it was difficult for the wives of labourers or servants; "Among the latter there are many who do not go beyond a wage of 100 to 200 francs per month; they must pay their own head-tax, or 37 francs, and their wives, the same amount, as well as the Prestations, amounting to 30 francs. The total comes to 104 francs, equal to one-twelfth of the annual wage, itself only just enough to ensure an individual's

169. Gouellain, *op.cit.*, p. 219.

170. Chamber of Commerce notes to M. Diagne, 14 and 15 May 1932, file Cameroun AP 2353/5, Archives SOM, Paris.

171. Handwritten note for M. Diagne, same file.

subsistence in a place like Douala."¹⁷² But no reduction was made. The taxation of all women in 1931 probably did more to impoverish the lower paid workers in Douala than any effect of the Depression. But such workers suffered from redundancies due to the Slump.

The Annual Reports for Douala Circonscription have useful lists of wage-earning African staff, and these show the total numbers were already falling in 1930:¹⁷³

	<u>1929</u>	<u>1930</u>
Administrative staff)		
Business staff)	500	224
		398
Mechanics, carpenters, masons, other skilled staff	1,200	1,165
Drivers	366	325
Labourers	3,000	2,500
Servants	900	700
Miscellaneous	80	50

The total fell from 6,046 to 5,362. The first two categories included clerks and other office staff, many of them Dualas; the 1929 figure looks like a rough estimate of no use for calculations. The figures for other employees are precise and show predictable falls, all attributable to redundancy. Firms had to lay off staff, some closed down, and the government laid people off on completion of works projects – though the harbour extension works, which were completed in February 1931,¹⁷⁴ used forced labourers (already being sent home in 1930), and these complicate assessment of

172. Cortade to Commissioner, 27 July 1931, file APA 11217/B, Cameroon Archives.

173. Douala Annual Reports for 1929 (p.13) and 1930 (p.14), file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

174. Annual Report 1930, p.49.

the Slump's effect on labour. The inability of the government at that time to provide more work for people laid off on completion of projects was certainly due to the Slump; the Commissioner spent some time in France in 1931 trying to secure funds for new public works projects, without success.

The reduced volume of shipping and railway traffic must have meant less work for casual labourers. In all the rate of unemployment among the Strangers must have risen, and it may have been because of this that the police were energetic in sending back illegal immigrants in 1932: 1,157 in the first ten months of that year.¹⁷⁵

In 1930 leading British firms such as Holt and King were reported¹⁷⁶ to have told their employees to take salary cuts or go, with only the older staff in important posts, from Nigeria, Sierra Leone or Dahomey, remaining on full salaries. Probably with all firms the most skilled staff were, as always, the last to be laid off.

The extraordinary fact about the Duala planters is that they and other African farmers, as a whole, increased their production in the Slump years. Palm oil exports fell for a few years, but in 1933 exports of all three major products were greater, in quantity, than in 1929; there was a big increase for cocoa and palm kernels in 1932.¹⁷⁷ This is further proof that the Slump did not lead to abandonment of cash crop farming. The Dualas'

- 175. Douala Annual Report 1932, p. 17, file APA 11757, Cameroon Archives.
- 176. Douala Annual Report 1930, p. 12, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.
- 177. Annual Report 1930, p. 62; 1934, p. 114; 1932, p.24; 1933, p. 75ff.; 1934, p. 114.

share in it is not recorded, but they probably increased production by at least as much as others. The increase is very strange in view of the continual fall in prices. The 1932 Annual Report said the government had told the Africans the Slump was temporary.¹⁷⁸ They may have believed this, or else reacted like the semi-fictional planter of Kala-Lobe's article; when the French "Commandant" spoke about the Slump, "Knowing neither Europe nor a world other than our lands, nor about their crisis, we took the news indifferently and went back to our plantations."¹⁷⁹ The same article speaks of corruption and blackmail in the course of Produce Inspection; this very probably occurred, and it is curious that Produce Inspection was under the Chamber of Commerce, but in the early 1930s neither abuses by produce inspectors, nor ever-falling prices prevented a rise in cash crop exports which cannot, in addition, be attributed to forced cultivation. One can only assume that the planters worked hard to keep up a steady cash income, which meant more output, and that this created few problems for Duala planters whose labourers were paid by the use of plots of land rather than wages. The 1934 Annual Report in fact said – overstating the point – that African farmers had no overheads and thus suffered less.¹⁸⁰

All this confirms Cortade's conclusion made in 1930, that the poorer workers suffered through loss of jobs (he added, more questionably, that they would soon find new ones), and the better off people simply through cutting down on non-essential spending.¹⁸¹ Elite people do not seem

178. Annual Report 1932, p. 24.

179. Kala-Lobe, *op.cit.*, p. 74.

180. Annual Report 1934, p. 114.

181. Douala Annual Report 1930, p. 7, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

to recall the Depression as a time of suffering; it is not engraved in public memory as it is in Europe and the USA.

The 1932 Annual Report ^(for Douala) said people who still had money helped those who had not,¹⁸² and a missionary arriving then probably summed it up well when he wrote, "The crisis is still raging, but I have the impression that it is being endured better than one might have thought. It seems people have organised themselves as a consequence of it; there is poverty, but not wretchedness."¹⁸³

The Slump went on until 1934, after which there was a very rapid recovery. Produce prices reached an all-time low in 1934, when the price of palm oil, f.o.b. Douala, was 733 francs per ton (cf. 1,436 early in 1932), the price of cocoa 1,158 per ton (cf. 2,002 in 1931), and the price of palm kernels 397 per ton (cf. 935 in 1931).¹⁸⁴ Despite this the strange increase in African cash crop production continued.

After a peak figure of 382 ships in 1928 (including 110 French and 104 British),¹⁸⁵ shipping to Douala, including vessels loading and unloading at Suellaba, declined in the Slump years, and even by 1937 had not reached the 1928 figure again. After the completion of the main harbour works in 1931 further plans made by the government had to be shelved, while the railway was extended only by a branch line, mainly for timber, to Mbalmayo – the projected extension from Yaounde to northern Cameroon was dropped for lack of finance, mercifully for those who would have been

182. Douala Annual Report 1932, p. 1, file APA 11757, Cameroon Archives.

183. JME 1932, p. 641, letter of E. Nouvelon, 16 Oct. 1932.

184. Annual Report 1932, p.114; 1933, p.77; 1934, p. 105.

185. Chamber of Commerce Bulletin no. 14, January 1929.

forced to work on it in a new "Njock" forced labour enterprise. In 1934 some additions to the harbour facilities were made,¹⁸⁶ and in 1935 a special wharf for banana boats was opened at Bonaberi, near the terminus of the Northern Railway which brought the fruit from the Europeans' plantations.¹⁸⁷

In 1927-28, as boom turned into Slump, building reached a peak in Douala. Cortade wrote, "The appearance of certain parts of the town, such as the wharves, the Bali plateau and the districts stretching along the right and left sides of the rue de la Marine were greatly altered by this."¹⁸⁸ The Chamber of Commerce building at Bonanjo was completed in 1928; other buildings finished about then were Customs offices and staff houses, dockside installations for Chargeurs Réunis, and private houses along the avenue Cumberland (the modern avenue du General de Gaulle at Bonanjo), the avenue Poincaré (crossing Akwa), and other streets. In 1929 the pace of building slowed down, but in that year 26 building permits were given to individuals, for construction worth 2.3m. francs; 290,000 francs came from "native capital." This African building was to have a great impetus after the Bonadoo occupied their Bali plots and took money for houses there in 1931-2.

Among public buildings the new Central Railway terminus was completed in 1930¹⁸⁹ and the new Palais de Justice and the Native Hospital in Akwa in 1931.¹⁹⁰ The

186. Annual Report 1934, p. 58-9.

187. Chauleur (ed.), op.cit., p. 152-3.

188. Douala Annual Report 1929, p. 28, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

189. Chauleur (ed.), op.cit., Appendix 15.

190. Annual Report 1931, p. 36.

hospital was in fact not quite complete then; final additions were not made for three years, perhaps because of the Depression. But in 1931 two important new amenities for the town were completed; a new waterworks at Koumassi, to supplement the German one (still working well, but inadequate by now) at Deido,¹⁹¹ and a general electricity supply.¹⁹²

The government made various alterations to the main market.¹⁹⁰ Apart from these and the stall hire rates, which were regularly altered and apparently high (in 1931, 300 francs per month¹⁹³), little is recorded about the everyday African retail trade. From licence rate proclamations we learn that Africans could retail produce on their own account, i.e. not only for the firms, if they had, in 1931, a licence costing 1,000 francs.¹⁹⁴ The gazette tells a little more, while the Chamber of Commerce debates suggest that trading was not effectively confined within regulations; there were many complaints of traders doing more than their licences allowed, and a specific one in 1933¹⁹⁵ of market traders competing with firms for sales of imported goods. As the traders must have got their goods from the firms usually, this suggests either that some firms were doing better than others by encouraging African sales agents with good commissions, or that smuggling by fishermen was big enough to affect sales of European goods. That such smuggling was extensive is clear; fishermen roamed around

191. Chauleur (ed.), op.cit., p. 119; Report on Douala water supply by E. Bedier and F. Guichard, file APA 10278/B, Cameroon Archives.

192. Chauleur (ed.), op.cit., p. 121.

193. JOC 15 May 1931.

194. JOC 15 Dec. 1930. It was probably palm oil and palm kernels for domestic use.

195. Chamber of Commerce Bulletin, no. 52 and 53, reports of 15 Jan. 1933 and 19 Feb. 1933 sessions.

the creeks and rivers freely, often going to British Cameroons and collecting liquor for bootlegging to Douala.¹⁹⁶ The trader or "market-boy" (as he was called, in English or Pidgin, in Cameroun then) was not so free as the fisherman, but he escaped regimentation to some extent. No sooner had a bridge been built over the Beseke stream near the dockside in 1929 than movement over it was said to be "almost impossible because of the overcrowding caused by native fish sellers who are permanently stationed at each end in the morning."¹⁹⁷

The Population and the Strangers' Influx.

The surprising extent to which African life in Douala was organised without regard for colonial regimentation, without fully effective control by the authorities, is shown above all in the immigration of Strangers without the knowledge, still less the permission, of the French.

In 1930 the population of Douala Circonscription was officially put at 26,761.¹⁹⁸ By then the Circonscription, much reduced in size since 1919 by readjustments, covered little more than the urban area. Legally the latter extended to the Tokoto Creek, entering the Wouri downstream from Bonanjo, and on the right bank extended from Bonaberi to the Bomono and Mungo creeks.¹⁹⁹ Thus it contained some

196. L'Eveil du Cameroun, Douala, 8 Feb. 1939.

197. Chamber of Commerce Bulletin no. 24, Jan. 1930.

198. Douala Annual Report 1930, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

199. JOC 15 Nov. 1928.

rural areas, while others, the Bassa and Bakoko villages, were outside the town legally and in reality then, but within the Circonscription. Most of the population was in the real urban area, somewhat smaller than the legal one.

That urban population seems to have been much more than the authorities thought. In 1929 there was a general campaign against sleeping sickness in Douala, and this indicated a figure of 20,000 for the African Strangers alone. The sleeping sickness teams visited 13,362 people in New-Bell, where nearly all the inhabitants were Strangers while not all Strangers lived there (they found 56 cases). In Akwa they visited 3,751 residents and 5,888 of the "floating population", finding 16 and 8 cases respectively.²⁰⁰

There seem to have been perhaps 10,000 more people in Douala than the official censuses showed. The difference was accounted for by immigrant Strangers who had every reason to avoid the censuses; not only were those made for taxation purposes, for immigrants they could lead to demands for papiers and expulsion back to the home village. Many must have avoided the censuses, and also the compulsory registration of births and deaths introduced in 1928. Three paramount chiefs were appointed registrars: in 1930 they were Ngaka Akwa for Douala on the left bank, Mbappe Bwanga for Bonaberi, and Ndokat Nongue for the rural Bassas and Bakokos.²⁰¹ Not surprisingly, the

200. Annual Report 1929, p. 25-6.

201. JOC 15 August 1930.

1930 Circonscription Annual Report said the "floating population" resisted registration, especially the Bakokos and Bamouns;¹⁹⁸ the similar report for 1929 said it was incompletely applied even among the Dualas.²⁰² Yet Cortade, in those reports, seemed to believe his administration's population figures. The sleeping sickness campaign figures must be nearer the truth; presumably the health teams simply counted numbers of people visited or vaccinated, and did not take down details which could help the catching of tax evaders or illegal immigrants, so that Africans anxious not to be caught in that way would be willing to be vaccinated.

The Missions, like the health teams, were more likely than the government to get an idea of the real population. A Protestant Mission estimate in 1931 of 45,000 inhabitants is not improbable.²⁰³ The Protestant Mission had 20,567 communicants in 1931, and 2,462 catechumens in Douala; there were also non-practicing Protestants (1,175 were excommunicated in 1930-31 alone),²⁰⁴ and there may have been adherents of the NBC who did not attend the Mission churches. The figures for Protestant communicants and catechumens may include some rural areas, but even allowing for this, Douala town probably had 20,000 Protestants at least, practicing and not, while the Holy Ghost Fathers Mission had 8,503 Catholics and 2,771 catechumens in 1931-35;²⁰⁵ there were other Catholics

202. Douala Annual Report 1929, p. 22-3, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

203. JME 1931, p. 625ff.

204. JME 1932, p. 649.

205. Chronique des Missions 1931-33 (Holy Ghost Fathers), p.89.

under the Sacred Heart Fathers at Bonaberi, and there were probably several hundred Muslims, and, one can assume, a number of people of the traditional religions who had not yet joined the Missions' catechism classes.* The town had probably 35,000 people at the very least in 1931.

So thousands of immigrants lived in Douala in daily defiance of the half-dozen influx-control regulations. It is easy to understand their reaching Douala by bush paths, but their continued stay there suggests plenty of connivance. The separation of Strangers at New-Bell into ethnic districts may have helped people hide their countrymen from police checks. The evasion was so extensive that the very Strangers' Chiefs appointed by the French to control the "floating population" must have connived at the presence of illegal immigrants. This is further evidence of the greater degree of freedom and initiative which Africans had in an urban setting under colonial rule. Not only Dualas, but Strangers also showed solidarity against the alien rulers. Dualas would have protected immigrants still living in Akwa and Deido. European employers probably took on workers without ever asking if they had permission to be in Douala. The illegal immigrants were most likely from the same principal areas of origin as the legal, or recorded, ones, most being Bassas and Betis, with some of the Bamilekes who were to become so important later.

Urban immigrants, as in other countries, were often considered as typically criminal. The actual rate of crime among them is hard to tell because so many evaded contact with

* The Holy Ghost Fathers estimated the number of "infidels" as high as 15,000 in 1934-5 (Etat Statistique Annuel 1934-35, Douala station, Holy Ghost Fathers archives).

the authorities. The small number of police may have meant that many offences remained undetected besides the "offence" of illegal travelling to Douala. In 1929 there were 492 Indigénat punishments for "vagrancy" or failure to have a laissez-passer²⁰⁶ – perhaps one tenth of the illegal immigrant population.

Under a new Decree on Justice on 31 July 1927, the single tribal court in each Circonscription was replaced by two, a First-Degree and a Second-Degree Court, the latter handling appeals from the former as well as dealing with some serious cases in first instance.²⁰⁷ Both were under European chairmen. Figures regularly published in later years of cases coming before the two courts in Douala suggest an astonishingly low rate of criminal cases. 75 robberies tried by the First-Degree Court in 1928, and 67 in 1931,²⁰⁸ seem small figures for a population of 35,000. The total number of Indigénat convictions in 1929 – 1,869²⁰⁶ – also seems small, as Indigénat regulations were so numerous and Europeans officials' power to punish breach of them so limitless. Either the Africans of Douala were very law-abiding, or many people escaped arrest for many offences because there were so few police (55 in 1930²⁰⁹) and because their behaviour would naturally lead people to regard them as the enemy and refuse to help them except, now and then, to settle private scores. Certainly the way in which the police harassed the

206. Douala Annual Report 1929, p. 18-19, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

207. JOC 15 Sept. 1927.

208. Douala Annual Report 1929 (see note 206); Douala Annual Report for 1932, file APA 11757, Cameroon Archives.

209. JOC 15 July 1930.

people for their papiers, which people were supposed to keep in a metal container called ngongo in Douala and produce on demand,²¹⁰ sounds likely to encourage contempt for the multiple rules and regulations. So Douala always had a large number of people living in continual defiance of the authorities, mainly Strangers.

This makes it impossible to credit figures for the return of immigrants to their home areas in the Slump years;²¹¹ the city's population may never have stopped growing. By 1930 Dualas (probably numbering about 15,000) may already have been in a minority in their city.

Leading immigrants from other areas of Cameroun included their Chiefs, notably Marcous Eteme, Chief of the "Yaounde people," and the assessors appointed to the two courts created in 1927. In 1932 the Second-Degree Court assessors included M'Boko Fobran ("Yaounde," i.e. Beti), Jambo N'Dem (Bafia), Jean N'Koum (Bamileke), Benoît Ateba (Boulou) and Félix Mougo (Batanga); those for the First-Degree Court included Eteme, Simon Djengue (Chief of the Bamilekes in New-Bell later, perhaps already then), and Mitebe Mitebe (Bakoko, possibly immigrant but not certainly).²¹²

Most Camerounian immigrants to Douala were craftsmen, such as Gabriel Libom the blacksmith; shopkeepers, such as Michel Ndzana from the Yaounde region;²¹³ junior staff of the government, e.g. policemen and prison warders, perhaps sometimes recruited from their home areas and posted to Douala;

210. See e.g., account in L. Moume Etia, Nyango Mangoule ma Deido.

211. Cited by Gouellain, op.cit., p. 219.

212. JOC 15 Jan. 1932.

213. Interviews, Gabriel Libom and Michel Ndzana.

and staff, usually unskilled, of the firms. Most were ill-paid and many unemployed. It was not surprising that New-Bell became notorious for slum conditions, with poor and overcrowded huts. In 1930 many such huts were destroyed, and although it was said that new ones were being built,²¹⁴ such operations, which were to recur often in New-Bell, were probably as harsh, arbitrary, and conducive to petty corruption as the other public health measures in Douala.

The non-Camerounian immigrants were socially on a different level from most of the Camerounian ones. They were, as they had for long been, clerks with the firms, major retail traders, and practitioners of superior crafts such as tailoring and photography. The Hausas, petty traders with neat but not solid houses in their own district of New-Bell, were different from the others, though one, Malam Bako, was in 1928 buying or leasing 770 square metres of land in Bonadibong from Ngoka Dika.²¹⁵ The other immigrants included many of the 153 small businessmen mentioned in 1929 – 49 tailors, 20 transport operators, 30 grocers and similar retailers, 18 cobblers, 12 jewellers, 14 photographers²¹⁶ – and many of the clerks of the important British firms; some clerks received 1,600 francs per month with those firms,²¹⁶ probably West African immigrants among them.

214. Douala Annual Report 1930, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

215. JOC 1 August 1928.

216. Douala Annual Report 1929, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

African immigrants mentioned in the later 1920s and earlier 1930s included Clement Anthony Cudjoe, a Gold Coast clerk with John Holt in Douala, who was accused of embezzlement and fled, his extradition being later sought from the Belgian Congo;²¹⁷ Richard Hilaire, a Dahomean clerk with the Compagnie Commerciale Africaine in 1926, when he and another clerk embezzled 250,000 francs from the firm, after which he was gaoled but escaped;²¹⁸ the Nigerian businessman Akinshowon; Joseph Paraiso, Chief of the Dahomeans and a successful poultry farmer; Goethe George, who left Holt to found his photographic studio (Photo George) at Akwa in 1930; Thomas Tchikaya, the Congolese tailor; Diongue Momar, a Senegalese jeweller who died in Douala in 1933; and Court Assessors – in 1932, Malam Boubakar(Hausa) for the First-Degree Court, and for the Second-Degree Court père Tchikaya (sic) (Congolese), Mamadou Sall (Senegalese), Josephu Olpha (Lagosian), M'Vondo Mistole (Gabonese), Frédéric Wilson (Dahomean), and Mai Bornu (described as Hausa but presumably Kanuri).²¹²

Missions in a Christian City.

The Douala of fifty years ago was a smaller version of the Douala of today in being heterogereous in tribe, but mainly Christian in religion. Muslims and Pagans were a minority in the early 1930s. The

217. Commissioner to Governor-General of Belgian Congo, Yaounde 7 Sept. 1932, file APA 12395, Cameroon Archives.

218. Compagnie Commerciale Africaine to Commissioner, 21 April 1927; official report on escape on 17/18 April 1927; file APA 10404/D, Cameroon Archives.

Protestant churches alone were followed by over half the population – most of the Dualas and many of the Strangers; most of the Strangers, and some Dualas, were Catholics.

In 1931 there were 16,116 Evangelical and 4,451 Baptist communicants under the Protestant Mission at Douala – possibly, as noted above, including the nearby rural areas where Modi Din was actively making converts then. Discipline was severe and there were many excommunications. But there were still many converts, as indicated by the figures for catechumens: 1,610 being taught by the Evangelicals and 852 by the Baptists.²¹⁹

The Mission was still concerned about traces of the traditional religion. There were many such traces, including the rites surrounding the canoe races;^{*} one may possibly add the strong belief in witchcraft and in traditional protection against it.²²⁰ One of the Mission's schoolmistresses, Idelette Allier, wrote in 1932 that her girl pupils were "at heart very pagan."²²¹ Pastor Rusillon was troubled by the semi-pagan mourning customs of the Dualas:

"How many times have I not passed long hours of the night in some hut where a young Duala was at his last rest, a government interpreter, a civilised man. There, on a big bed covered with spotless sheets, lay the corpse of a young man dressed in new clothes, with his hands crossed, holding a bouquet of roses, a silk handkerchief

* See Chapter Five.

219. JME 1932, p. 648 ff.

220. Ndimisi, by E. de Rosny (Yaounde, 1974), describes the survival of these beliefs today.

221. Mlle. Allier (=Mme. Dugast, the anthropologist), letter published in JME, second half of 1930, p. 274-6.

in his jacket pocket, and delicately placed at his side a note-book, a book, often even his New Testament. On one side of his bed, old women, dressed in their black dress covered with black neckerchiefs, danced gloomily, recounting to some unknown deity all the acts and deeds of the dead man, seeking to attract pity in advance from evil spirits, and above all insisting, one as much as another, on the fact that they had nothing to do with the death of him who lay there. But, besides these women who lamented, children played, men talked of a thousand other things, laughed and smoked; and when the dances had finished, and the night was advancing, everyone slept in the dead man's room to await dawn, one on the damp earth, one on a native chair, one beside the corpse...."²²²

But most of the preaching of the missionaries was not of a particularly missionary sort; they spoke as pastors did in Europe. They denounced the vices of Douala as they would those of a European city. As a seaport and a centre of all sorts of amusement and indulgence, Douala seemed to churchmen, and still does, as a den of iniquity. In 1926 the Protestant Mission Conference said that in Douala, "the youth is cutting itself off from the Church. Temptations and bad influences are multiplying as this city becomes a big commercial centre where opportunities to earn and spend increase without ceasing and where the number of Europeans is increasing."²²³ The Mission persuaded the government to close a dance-hall at Deido in 1927 but

222. Rusillon in Mission Report for 1931-32, JME 1932, p.645

223. JME 1926, p. 293.

others remained, including Emile Fischer's well-known one for Africans at Akwa; Cortade's official report for Douala in 1929 said there were "trop de bars...trop de filles publiques."²²⁴ Rusillon told the Mission Conference in 1929, "Douala is Babylon, a dead city, dead spiritually for him who crosses it, a city whose soul is etiolated, cheapened, sullied by the amusements of oblivion. No doubt there is exuberance, liveliness, activity, but all that is only a façade; in reality there is death."²²⁵

On the subject of drink the Huguenot missionaries were very concerned and certainly too severe. There had been strict prohibition laws in force since 1916, often revised but always forbidding spirits to Africans, who could drink wine and beer. There was in fact imported liquor available for Africans; some was brought in by fishermen, some was bought for them by Europeans, many of whom were sentenced for such fraudes d'alcool. Duala^s also distill a potent "African gin." The Mission said in 1927 that, "alcoholism is master in Douala,"²²⁶ but Cortade, no friend of the Africans, did not support this view in his report for 1929; he said that while Africans could buy beer and red and white wine at bars, other drink shops and off licences, they seldom took any home (as the dipsomaniac Duala tribe depicted in missionary reports would surely have done), and their favourite drink in the bars was... lemonade.²²⁴ In 1931 Marchand said of French Cameroun

224. Douala Annual Report 1929, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives, p. 10-11.

225. Quoted in van Slageren, op.cit., p.231.

226. JME 1927, p.227-8.

generally that alcoholism "does not exist here."²²⁷

But the missionaries in some ways treated the Dualas not as a Mission flock but as ordinary sinful Christians. The Duala, said Rusillon in 1935, "is no longer a child, he leaves his father's house."²²⁵ Dualas showed a spontaneous vigour and initiative in the Church. This had led to the breakaway of the NBC, which was becoming more active and vocal after 1930. But among Protestants still following the Mission, it was reported in 1933 that the churches had never been so full and lay associations flourished: men's choirs, a lay movement for young men, Male me makom m'ebasi (Union of friends of the Gospel), and a women's association, Ndola'anya (new love).²²⁸ In 1935 Rusillon spoke of the "crowd of associations" but said they must be directed and closely watched;²²⁹ and later the Annual Report for the Mission said that in Douala, "the Churches are alive. But this liveliness itself becomes worrying, for it often reveals itself in initiatives which the missionary cannot sufficiently control. Societies of men and women multiply there, sometimes under the impulse of separatist and tribal preoccupations."²³⁰

The phrase "...which the missionary cannot sufficiently control..." indicates that normal missionary attitudes remained strong, with European churchmen not unhappy at being able to control people more than they could in a European parish. In Douala there were regular sessions where Christians

227. Marchand to Minister, 13 March 1931, file APA 11680/D, Cameroon Archives.

228. JME, second half of 1933, p. 566.

229. JME 1935, p. 551.

230. Annual Report for 1937-9, JME 1938, p. 694.

reported on each other so that the Mission could take disciplinary action.²³¹ The question of discipline imposed by the missionaries had led to the growth of support for the NBC in 1921-2, and the same apparently happened ten years later, when the Mission was worried by the support given to the expanding Native Baptist group.

But there were many keen Christians, and the Dualas who worked full time for the Mission were said by one missionary to be "for the most part admirable."²³² The catechists and teachers gave up a part of their salaries, never very large, at the height of the Depression.²³³ There were squads of Eclaireurs going around Douala at night to keep people from sin.²³⁴ The YMCA was holding weekly meetings attended by about 50 people in 1931; in that year Max Mpacko attended the YMCA International Conference in Toronto.²³⁵ Mpacko was one of the laymen prominent in Church affairs; there were many others, such as Mandessi Bell and Eteki. Among the pastors Manga Elokan had to be restrained in his zeal by the missionaries; he was so zealous that he refused to accept the bride price for his daughter.²³⁶ To the sorrow of the Mission he lived for only four years after his consecration, dying on 24 April 1930.²³⁶

The "doyen of the Cameroun pastoral corps," the old Pastor Alfred Tobbo Eyoum (Tobbo Deido), died on 28 January 1932.²³⁷ By then the Mission had more pastors;

231. Interview, Pastor Rusillon. In retrospect Rusillon disliked the practice.

232. M. Scheurer in JME 1932, p.30.

233. JME 1932, p.30.

234. JME 1929, p.238.

235. JME 1931, p.564, 625 ff.

236. JME, first half of 1930, p.392-3; second half of 1930, p.275.

237. JME 1932, p.213; Léopold Moume Etia papers.

at Easter in 1931 Kouo Issedou laid hands on Martin Itondo and Martin Bapek in Douala.²³⁸ Pastor Itondo of Bell (1892-1955) was one of the most famous Duala churchmen; he had worked for the Evangelical church for some time before becoming a pastor. He composed many well-known hymns and possibly the music for Tet'Ekombo. Gottlieb Munz Dibundu, younger son of Yoshua Dibundu, followed his father and his brother Alfred Tongo Dibundu into the Baptist ministry on 23 Oct. 1932, when he and Otto Epale and Pierre Ebumbu Tanga were consecrated by five missionaries and ten African pastors.²³⁹

In 1931 the Missions in Douala had, besides the pastors, nine evangelists, 126 catechists and 27 assistants for the Evangelicals; two evangelists, 35 catechists and one assistant for the Baptists.²⁴⁰ These auxiliaries were vital for the Mission even in Douala, much more so in rural areas. Thus the Mission protested angrily when the government, by an Arrêté of 24 April 1930, subjected all postes secondaires of all Missions – i.e. all installations run by African auxiliaries, such as catechists' stations, doctrine schools and dispensaries – to official authorisation. The government alleged various misdeeds by such auxiliaries away from permanent missionary supervision, but the Missions did not agree and considered the measure an irksome restriction.²⁴¹

The government may have been influenced by the

238. JME 1931, p. 468ff.

239. JME 1932, p. 640.

240. JME 1932, p. 648ff.

241. Annual Report 1930, p. 13-14; Interview, Pastor Rusillon.

greater independence which Africans had in "Church" than in "State," and the initiative shown by African church-workers such as those of the Protestant Mission in areas near Douala at that time. It had been wary of signs of religious enthusiasm among Africans since the emergence on Lotin Same and his church. When Petrus Epanya, now at Molyko in British Cameroons, applied again for permission to start a church, the Douala Central Police Commissioner said this would lead to "an excessive growth of the spirit of religious and political independence among the Dualas,"²⁴² and once again permission was refused. The police officer said there had been recent acts of hostility against missionaries, including throwing of stones at a pastor at Christmas. This shows that the feelings aroused by the NBC were still strong. So was the NBC itself. There is no evidence that its adherents were ever unable to meet for prayers, hymns and sermons, in private houses or in the open if not in churches. But in some way or another, to be discussed in the next chapter, the Independents felt they lacked some recognition and sought to achieve it, and feelings in support of them revived noticeably from 1930.

The Arrê^êté on Missions' African staff in 1930 seems to have been directed mainly against the Holy Ghost Fathers Mission, which was on continual bad terms with the government at this time. This may have been increased by the mass conversion of the Betis, which must have put the mission in a position reminding the commonly anti-clerical

242. Petrus Epagna (sic) to Commissioner, Molyko 5 June 1928; Central Police Commissioner, Douala, to Chef de Circonscription, 28 June 1928; letter to M. Bleu, Yaounde, 16 July 1928; file APA 10547/A, Cameroon Archives.

administrators of the situation in Brittany. In Douala the Catholic Missions were much less important. An Apostolic Prefecture of Douala was created in mid-1931, with Mgr. le Mailloux as Prefect; in May 1932 it became a Vicariate Apostolic, still headed by le Mailloux.²⁴³

An outstanding member of the Catholic minority among the Dualas, the catechist Andreas Mbangué, died on 16 August 1932, after decades of work in Douala for the Pallotines and then for the Holy Ghost Fathers.

A new Catholic cathedral was opened in 1934, probably the finest of the buildings erected in Douala in those years. The building was carried out by a team of workers under the direction of Brother Materne, a Holy Ghost lay brother. The foundations had been completed by April 1933, the body of the Cathedral by May 1934. Midnight Mass was celebrated at the Cathedral the following Christmas. It was later completed to be an attractive white church with two towers, dominating the skyline of Bonanjo and Akwa from its position on the edge of the Akwa plateau overlooking the Beseke stream and the railway. It was consecrated on 19 March 1936, in the presence of the Commissioner, Répique, and a more than capacity crowd.²⁴⁴

The Europeans.

The majority of the white community in Douala were very different from the missionaries, one of whom considered

243. Bulletin de la Congrégation du Saint-Esprit, vol.35, 1931-2, p. 240-1, 747

244. L'Eveil du Cameroun 1 April 1936.

Europeans to be among the spiritual evils of the city.²⁴⁵

The number of Europeans in Douala Circonscription, virtually all in the city, was 819 in 1927, 882 in 1928 and 801 in 1929;²⁴⁶ the fall in numbers which began then continued through the Depression years, until there remained 639 in 1934,²⁴⁷ after which the figure rose again. Their importance was out of proportion to their numbers because some were officials while most managed the big firms and controlled import-export business.

The officials included some medical officers, and the white officers of the police and militia, besides the ordinary administrative and technical staff. The total number of "European" officials in Douala included usually some West Indians, treated for all purposes as Europeans, and always a number of Senegalese, who although many if not all were French citizens complained in a petition sent on 29 April 1931 that they were not treated as such, but as African sujs. In correspondence which followed their countryman Diagne, Under-Secretary for the Colonies, was informed that there were about 50 Senegalese in Douala, 23 from the Quatre Communes; 17 worked for the government, mostly on a contractual basis, only Mamadou Diop, who was ouvrier d'art principal de première classe du cadre local des Travaux Publics, Chemins de Fer, Ports et Rades, being integrated.²⁴⁸

Even with the Senegalese included officials were

245. JME 1926, p. 293.

246. Douala Annual Report 1929, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

247. L'Eveil du Cameroun 1934.

248. Petition of Senegalese, 29 April 1931; Bleu to Diagne, 18 Dec. 1931; file APA 10658/A, Cameroon Archives.

probably much less than half of the French community in Douala, which formed the greater part of the European colony (there were a few dozen British, Germans and Greeks usually). Most of the French in Douala and virtually all the other Europeans were businessmen. There were two main classes of expatriate businessmen: representatives of big companies usually based in Europe and operating in many parts of Africa, and businessmen à leur compte who set up their own enterprises on the spot – either trading firms or plantation, timber, or small-industrial enterprises. Those who started rural enterprises were usually called colons.

Many of the firms' area or branch managers, or other representatives, spent long periods in Douala, such as Arthur Balteaux of CFAO, Jean Barben (a Swiss) of R. & W. King, Henry Robins of Heywood & Robins (British), Peter Firmenich of Woermann Linie and André Xenackis of Paterson Zochonis. But the Europeans who really settled in Douala and became leaders of the white community there were the independent businessmen. Apart from the Lebanese Emile Nassif the most prominent were French: Charles Lalanne (1892-1952), Joseph Mas, Emile Fischer and others.

Lalanne had been a soldier and a teacher before going in for business, at first in partnership with Charles Frelet. He was a dynamic and enterprising character well known in Douala for over 30 years. It was he who in 1928 became editor of a new commercial newspaper, L'Eveil du Cameroun. The first issue appeared on 24 March 1928 in Yaounde. In the

following October a group of businessmen in Douala bought the newspaper and transferred it to Douala, where it was edited and printed at the Imprimerie Commerciale du Cameroun. This became the leading commercial printing press in French Cameroun, with extensive work besides the newspaper. Its staff included a Senegalese chief typesetter, Ibra Alia N'Diaye, who on 27 Jan. 1934 won the Mérite Indigène, among other things for being "respectful towards Europeans."

L'Eveil, edited by Lalanne until February 1931, was above all a Europeans' newspaper, and to a great extent a local newspaper for Douala. In Feb. 1931 its editorship and the management of the ICC were taken over by Eugène Schneider (1873-1939), an Alsatian timber contractor. He was already one of the most prominent expatriates in Douala even before he began filling the columns of L'Eveil with his forceful views.

The Chamber of Commerce was a meeting place for Europeans, who dominated its monthly meetings in Douala; they also used its building for receptions and other social occasions. Leading expatriate figures served as its major officers. Lalanne was elected Secretary-General in 1928 and held the post for several years, during which the Presidency changed hands frequently: M. Duten of the Banque Française de l'Afrique, then the tobacco planter Roger Thillard, M. Allary of the Banque de l'Afrique Occidentale, M. Lombard of CFAO, and then, in 1932, Maurice Bouvier of SHO. The Chamber went through a period of confusion in 1933, with elections of its committee held twice for reasons hard to discern; the impression is of internal

feuds typical of expatriate colonies. When it was finished the President was M. Balteaux; in 1935 Charles Péreton, a planter in the Kribi area, was elected.²⁴⁹

Besides the Chamber of Commerce building the Lido hotel was the usual place for Europeans' social events; for years it was run by Louis Schuller, an Alsatian. The ex-German Grand Hôtel was still doing well in the 1930s, run for a time by Lucien Millet, one of the great white eccentrics of Douala, where he also ran at various times a bus service, a service of tractors and trailers for goods haulage at the docks, and a bookshop.²⁵⁰ Another "character" was Henri Achezar, an illiterate Sardinian who owned the Hôtel du Palais after doing various sorts of work in various parts of Africa;²⁵⁰ he was ruined in the Slump but stayed in Douala until his death in 1938. There was also the Yugoslav building contractor Henry Schmidt, who ran up big debts before he died, ruined by the Slump, on 5 March 1932.²⁵¹ More conventional were people like Lalanne, Mas, and Jean Heymann, who ran an import-export business and a café at the corner of the avenue Poincaré and the rue Ivy in Bonanjo.

Marchand said many Europeans were "deliberately inclined to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs so long as they make money in the shortest possible time." He called the Chamber of Commerce "narrow-minded and moribund"

249. Details of all these changes are in the Chamber of Commerce Bulletins for those years.

250. J. Martet, Les Bâisseurs de Royaumes, p. 122-8.

251. Commissioner to Cortade, Yaounde 15 Oct. 1932, file APA 12395, Cameroon Archives.

and said Africans did not have enough protection against European businessmen.²⁵² The Chamber in return was hostile to Marchand, whom expatriates must have thought too pro-African. Most Europeans were very racist. There was no residential segregation, but there was segregation in bars, hotels and restaurants, apparently by convention rather than law though the Mandate did not forbid such things.*

The European community included many straight criminal types. Some sold alcohol illicitly to Africans, others shipped workers to Fernando Po secretly. There were some more serious crimes. The worst of all (probably) in the Mandate period, the torturing to death of an African by a Frenchman named Boisson and three other whites, took place in the Yaounde area in 1926; but when the four were taken to Douala for trial some of the Europeans there demonstrated in favour of them, shouting Vive Boisson!²⁵³ Light sentences were passed, including a five-year sentence on Boisson.

If other Europeans repudiated such crimes as this, racialism was normal. The main exception to it, as elsewhere in Africa, was in respect of black girls. Many Europeans had African mistresses and there were a number of half-caste children, whom the authorities cared for in many cases.

* Even today there are bars in Douala where an African customer is almost never seen.

252. Marchand to Minister, undated but apparently early 1931, file APA 10038, Cameroon Archives.

253. Procureur de la République to Commissioner, 28 April 1928; Bleu to Minister, 14 May 1928, with copy of sentence; Cortade to Commissioner, 22 Dec. 1926; Chef de Circonscription, Yaounde, to Commissioner, 18 Dec. 1926; file APA 10934/A, Cameroon Archives.

CHAPTER FIVE

DOUALA IN THE THIRTIES

After the collapse of organised protests about 1932 the Dualas seem to have established a working compromise with the government, in which leading chiefs were given a role by the French and were no longer pushed into opposition activity by their people. As in other parts of Africa, the early 1930s were the heyday of colonialism, with resistance virtually absent for some years. Douala in those years affords a picture, typical in some ways but exceptional in others, of an African city in the Indian Summer of colonial rule.

A major activity of Dualas in those years, following directly on the failure of protests, was building. The surrender made by the Bonadoo in accepting the land offered at Bali led to a change in the urban geography of Douala. The building bonuses were used to good effect and Bali became a major upper-class Duala residential area. As such it extended to Koumassi and to the districts occupied by the former inhabitants of Bonapriso and Bonadouma and called after their old home districts. Today this large area is the main district of typical well-to-do Dualas' houses. They are bungalows of pale-coloured masonry, attractively designed with verandahs often going all round. They are laid out along straight grid-pattern roads which were until recently untarred but well shaded with mango and other trees. The building of such houses began in the 1930s

in Bali and, as the money for building was presented as a gift, added greatly to the number of modern houses built by Dualas.

Many of the occupants of new plots at Bali had their titles confirmed later under the provisions of two decrees on African property in French Cameroun, issued on 21 July 1932. One supplemented a decree of 20 August 1927 providing for constatation, recognition, of customary law rights to land. After 1932, as before, this was sought by some property owners, but many others did not bother, as it was not vitally necessary; Africans' land had always been treated as their own in the towns for all practical purposes, including leasing. The other 1932 decree, applied only from 1934, provided for full French-law registration, immatriculation, of landed property. Only a few Dualas applied for this in the next few years.

Applications for constatation tell something about the Duala elite: about its members, with well-known names such as Mudute Bell, Lobe Manga Priso, Toto Ngosso, Samuel Dimithe and others, and some less well known, appearing in the gazette in connection with applications; and about the size of its landed property. Confirmation of land titles did not indicate any precise sort of development of the land, but in the Bonadoo resettlement area this commonly took the form of house building, and some of this continued in other areas too. Customary tenure had always been secure enough for individuals to invest, since the German period, in solid houses, whose continued spread was noted

in 1929.¹ Such investment must usually have paid off; besides living in the houses, people could let them out or mortgage them. The 1932 Circonscription Annual Report said, "The Dualas, feckless people, mortgage their possessions to obtain money which they waste. A number of buildings are mortgaged. The Duala owners will perhaps never recover them."²

In 1933 two plots of land with houses were seized from Mudute Bell under a court order, presumably as foreclosure for that elite personality's chronic debts (not for the first or last time). One covered 157 square metres and included a masonry house let to Me. Fouletier; the other was much larger (1 are, 29 hectares) with a two-storey masonry house leased to Mme. Bellanger. The notice of the court order said bidding for auction of the seized properties would start at 30,000 francs for each.³ It is not clear whether Mudute Bell actually lost those properties, of which the larger, at the crossroads of the rue Cumberland and rue George in Bonanjo, may have been the one he was allowed to keep in 1914.

Someone like Franz Mudute Bell (1882-1942) – a leading elder of the Bonadoo, brother of the Paramount Chief, a former government official, a big property owner, with a son studying in France – can unquestionably be put in the Duala elite. But more generally, who constituted that elite?

The French administrators themselves took an interest in it, but their views could be rather odd. A

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1. Douala Circonscription Annual Report 1929, p. 28ff., file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.
 2. Douala Annual Report 1932, file APA 11757, Cameroon Archives.
 3. L'Eveil du Cameroun 15 Feb. 1933.

report in 1935 spoke of 5,000 planters and separate groups of "chiefs and their familiers," the "clerks," and no less than 8,000 fishermen.⁴ Such classifications show little knowledge about the Dualas, itself a suggestive fact about French rule over them. Some office workers and probably all chiefs had plantations, and chiefs, and planters were of the same families. The number of fishermen is unlikely to have approached 8,000. But there were probably many more fishermen than the mere 300 estimated by Cortade in 1929;⁵ living for much of the time on their temporary camps in the creeks, and valuing their freedom, the fishermen could easily evade counting. Some fishermen and other Dualas were not elite people at all. But some fishermen, and some traditional craftsmen such as ivory workers, were definitely so, and rich. Whatever its exact number, the Duala elite, by any reasonable definition, was an unusually high proportion of the tribe's total numbers, because of its exceptional history and circumstances. They were, in a way, a whole elite tribe in relation to other tribes. More narrowly, one can assess the number of chiefs, elders, clerks, other office staff, important traders and businessmen, pastors and other church workers, and planters with their families, at half at least of the total population of 15-20,000 Dualas.

Such a number is indicated by a careful study made

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- 4. Circonscription Annual Report 1935, quoted in Gouellain, *op cit.*, p. 239-40.
 - 5. Douala Annual Report 1929, p. 46-7, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

by the Douala Circonscription authorities in 1930.⁶ There were 1,490 skilled and specialised paid African staff; 224 government and business clerical and office staff; 91 African workers with the Missions; 181 traders; and 349 planters and major property owners, in Douala Circonscription. Not all were Dualas but most of the government clerical staff probably were, and many of the government technical staff, almost all of the planters, and all of the urban landlords; only among the business staff and traders were other Africans (mainly non-Camerounian) important. The government report called all these "European-trained and mainly literate people," which is fair enough if all sorts of modernisation and contact with new influences are covered. This is in fact a list of the main categories of the African elite in Douala, possibly excluding the traditional chiefs and elders but perhaps even including many of them among the planters and major property owners.

In 1930 trade licences were given in Douala to

- 64 retail traders
- 61 petty traders (colporteurs)
- 39 tailors
- 22 transport operators
- 18 shoemakers
- 17 jewellers
- 11 photographers
- 10 bakers
- 8 woodworkers
- 5 mechanics
- 5 ivory workers
- 2 mattress-makers
- 1 clockmaker
- 1 weaver

7.

6. Douala Circonscription Annual Report 1930, p. 2, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

7. *ibid.*, p. 40 ff.

There were many non-Dualas among these. The Dualas among them included elite people such as one of the mattress-makers, Martin Lobe Bebe Bell, cousin of Rudolf Bell and composer of Tet'Ekombo, whose business did well (he was a government contractor).

The important change in the Duala elite noted by Cortade was the growing proportion of it under French rather than German influence.⁶ This was certainly important, though it had not gone so far in 1930 as Cortade thought, and otherwise there was little change in the character of the elite after 1916, at least for three decades or so. No new professional categories were added; not until after 1943 would there be African doctors or lawyers in their home town, such as there had been in Lagos since the 1880s. Dualas were doing the same work in 1935 as in 1905. "The dream of every Duala is to succeed, by way of examinations or competitions, in penetrating the administration," wrote Cortade in 1930,⁸ and there had been much truth in this since the German period. But the same official had noted in 1929 that not all worked in office jobs: "The young Duala seizes jobs in offices or shops, oversees his plantation, takes to commercial enterprise, and also practices crafts."⁹

Cortade could have added that Dualas often combined more than one of those occupations. Those working for the government could not engage in trade but they could

8. Douala Annual Report 1930, p. 23 (see note 6).

9. Douala Annual Report 1929, file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

have plantations. There were no clear divisions among the Duala elite. Chiefs, elders, planters, clerks were from the same families, and married each other's daughters. Within each of the four "Cantons" of the Dualas the leading elite people were related by blood or marriage and knew each other. The elite was in fact small enough for people to know each other even more widely. The associations called miemba (of which more below) helped in this. Intermarriage among the four main divisions of the tribe was not uncommon. As one example, one daughter of Pastor Manga Elokan of Deido was married to Francois Dika Bekombo, a government official from Akwa (who worked for the Sûreté for 30 years from 1939); the other was married to another Deido man, Leopold Moume Etia, son of Isaac.

The typical ways of spending money of the elite were much the same in the 1930s as in the German period, but there was no doubt a steady rise in durable purchases except in the First World War period. In 1929 the authorities in Douala issued 26 building permits to individuals, for buildings worth 2.3m. francs, of which 290,000 came from "native capital."¹⁰ Some Dualas bought cars, motor-cycles, and bicycles, and many spent money on entertainments (of which more shortly). Women bought expensive clothes; in 1926 Pastor Rusillon wrote that they ordered clothes from Samaritaine or Bon Marché in Paris for 400, 500 or 700 francs.¹¹

10. *ibid.*, p. 2ff., 27ff.

11. *Journal des Missions Evangéliques* 1927, p. 154.

The elite was obviously increasing, with the annual graduation of its sons from the various available schools continuing regularly (for the daughters there was a temporary setback with the closing of the Ecole Ménagère on 22 March 1932). By the same process the elite was becoming more and more French in culture. Although the German-era generation was to remain powerful until the Second World War, inevitably many of its leading members were removed from the scene in the preceding decade by death or retirement.

An outstanding personality of the Duala elite died on 14 November 1936: David Mandessi Bell. An adoptive son of King Ndumb'a Lobe, a very successful import-export businessman, a processor and exporter of timber, owner of many plantations, owner since 1897 of a fine modern house at Bonanjo, the financial backer of the land agitation at first, a pillar of the Protestant Mission, he was certainly one of Douala's leading citizens in the German and French periods. He was buried at the Bonadoo community's Njo Njo cemetery, with Rusillon and Modi Din conducting the service.¹²

Mandessi Bell sent his daughter Maria to Germany for education, and later sent his sons Sam and Jean to France. Maria's marriage to Mamadou Diop was among the most distinguished of many marriages between the Duala elite and Africans from other territories (another was between Goethe George and a niece of Betote Akwa). Diop,

12. Notes on pastors and leading Christians of Douala by Pastor J.-R. Brutsch.

the most prominent of the Senegalese in Douala, was earning 56,525 francs per year, including allowances, in 1931.¹³ He often visited France with his wife, and their son, the poet David Mandessi Diop, was born there in 1927. On 17 August 1935 Mamadou Diop died on leave in France.¹⁴

Sam Mandessi Bell returned from France in 1931, and on his father's death inherited the Bonanjo house and other property. David Mandessi Bell made provision in his will for spending of income from rents from houses or land, with some to be spent on the education of children, of whom 20 were named in the will. Rent from one house, let to the French businessman Grenouilleau, and half the income from a coffee farm, with some other plantations' income, would be used to pay a debt to the Credit Français.¹⁵

Erdmann Njo Eteki was another aristocratic businessman. In 1934 his daughters, Irma Makongue and Laurance Malady, returned¹⁶ from schooling in France, where their sisters went later. Makongue, who became a teacher, later married Sam Mandessi Bell – quite a society wedding it must have been. Malady married first a West Indian, then a Senegalese; she worked as a midwife.¹⁷

Two other Duala businessmen, both from Deido like Eteki, were prominent in the early 1930s. Samuel Moundo Esoukan was by then a leading import-export businessman and a member of the Chamber of Commerce, with a house by

13. Bleu to Diagne, Yaounde 18 Dec. 1931, file APA 10658/A, Cameroon Archives.

14. JOC 1 Nov. 1935.

15. Will of David Mandessi Bell. I am grateful to Dr. R. Austen for showing me a photocopy of this will.

16. L'Eveil des Camerouniens, 10 Sept. 1934.

17. Interview, Léopold Moume Etia.

the historic Silk-Cotton Tree of Deido;^{*} he was called Sam Black Deido but was not related to Sam Deido.¹⁸ He was to go on flourishing until recent times, and to acquire properties in Akwa, including one by the Paramount Chief's residence there.¹⁷ Then there was Eitel Kondo Ebele, formerly a clerk under the Germans, then a timber contractor and import-export entrepreneur under the French.¹⁸ In 1935 he was appointed to the Chamber of Commerce with Paul Sonne, a Mungo (born 1905), who was to be another leading African businessman in Douala until recent times.

Nseke Diboti, another Deido import-export businessman, was appointed a member of the Conseil des Notables in 1930 and a Court Assessor, for the 2nd-degree Court, in 1933: typical indications of the status of these Duala businessmen. Bema Mounague, of Bonakwamwang, was an active Duala member of the Chamber of Commerce in the 1930s. Other prominent Duala businessmen at that time included Isaac Doumbe Edimo (a member of the Chamber); the Eboumbou brothers, Moukoko, Din and Koma;¹⁷ and a woman, Madame Kouedi.

Later there was the famous Paul Soppo Priso, a Bell man, born in 1913. As a junior official in the Public Works and Mines Departments he began – at the age 18, so he recalls¹⁹ – to build houses to let out. He was to go far, much further than his elder brother Nfon Priso who was also a businessman; today he is the leading

* Said to have been planted by the Bassas before they sold the land to the Dualas.

18. Interview, Johannes Sam Deido.

19. Interview, Paul Soppo Priso.

property tycoon in Cameroon. He married Lisette Eteki, another daughter of Njo Eteki who had studied in France.

Of the other children of the Duala elite sent to school in France, Gaston Kingue Jong returned from there in 1931 and so, about the same time, did François Kouo, son of Pastor Kuo Issedou. That pastor was a true elite figure, with a large income, particularly from plantations, which upset the missionaries. François Kouo entered the African civil service like many young Dualas emerging from French schools, particularly the Ecole Supérieure in Yaounde.

In the African civil service Isaac Moume Etia was for long the outstanding figure. Besides his main work he also wrote many books, particularly on the Duala language and traditions. In 1926 he wrote La Langue de Douala par Vous-Même, forwarded to the Commissioner with praise by Cortade; in 1928 a Lexique Français-Douala and Quelques Renseignements sur la Coutume locale chez les Doualas (Cameroun); in 1930 Fables de Douala (Cameroun) en deux langues: Français-Douala and Grammaire abrégé de la langue Douala (Cameroun). For his linguistic studies and his aid to "France's work of civilisation in Africa" the clerk-interpreter from Deido was created on 21 October 1929 a Chevalier de l'Ordre Universel du Mérite Humain (an order based in Geneva). Of his sons Léopold was in France for studies from 1927 to 1939, and Abel followed his father into the African civil service.²⁰

20. L. and A. Moume Etia, Notice Biographique sur la Vie de Monsieur Isaac Moume Etia.

Moume Etia came under suspicion in 1930-31, but later he received important new postings outside Douala; from 1931 to 1935 he served in the Bamileke country, at Dschang, Bafoussam, then Dschang again, and finally, from 13 May 1933, Bafang. On 21 October 1935 he retired, though he was only 45 years old; he died four years later. His was a major loss to the ranks of the German-trained older generation of the elite in government service. Others were still serving, though two who were very prominent in the 1930s – Albert Mpondo Dika, posted to Bafia in 1934, and Guillaume Jemba, who after serving in the Commissioner's office joined in 1936 the Secretariat of the Chef de Région* in Douala, having reached the rank of Commis d'Ordre et de Comptabilité, First Class – had worked under the Germans only very briefly before the War.

Moume Etia's writings were one indication that the spread of French culture did not mean any serious loss of interest in the Duala language and traditions. On the contrary, the continued interest in these prevented a breach between the generations and limited and eased the adaptation to French culture. Not that the French seriously tried to uproot the Dualas' attachment to their traditions, although they insisted on teaching in French alone; they encouraged Moume Etia's work, and other African officials were encouraged to write about their people's traditions in La Gazette du Cameroun, and many did so. Many also contributed in 1934-35 to a private newspaper

* Circonscriptions were renamed Regions in 1935: see below.

in Douala which was for Africans and was published partly in Duala.

This was L'Eveil des Camerouniens, or L'Eveil des Camerounais, started in 1934 by Schneider, editor of L'Eveil du Cameroun. A rather irregular fortnightly, it was not a journal of record; it had some articles on recent events, some often well written reports of canoe races and other sporting events, but it did not report news at all regularly. There were limits to what such a newspaper could or would publish, but it did provide another outlet for writing by Dualas and others of the elite, usually if not always of the government junior staff. The venture lost money and Schneider, who was its editor (a Duala, Alfred A. Musinga, was assistant editor), warned in the issue of 25 Feb. 1935 that that would be the last issue but one for lack of money. But he also said the government had been asked for permission to publish a four-page newspaper in African languages – Duala, Bassa and Ewondo or Boulou – and French. Permission was evidently given, and on 23 March 1935 there appeared Jumwele la Bana ba Kamerun/L'Eveil des Camerounais. There were parts in Bassa, Ewondo and Boulou, but much longer ones in Duala.

After the first multi-lingual issue, however, the amount of the newspaper in African languages steadily declined, until it was very small in the issue of 25 May 1935, one of the last before the newspaper collapsed. The Africans had not shown much apparent interest in it as a vehicle for writing in their own languages, as the editor complained in the final issue of 1 June 1935. But the

Dualas of the younger generation were literate in Duala, and the French were fully reconciled to such attachment to custom, as they showed by many measures in the early 1930s.

Besides deciding in 1933 to record the major tribes' unwritten customary law²¹ the French administration under Bonnacarrère started official studies of Cameroun African languages, and an Arrêté of 21 April 1933 fixed bonuses for officials learning them.²¹ It noted, without any indication of concern or dissatisfaction, the spread of Duala outside the Duala tribe's area: "Richer than the neighbouring languages, Bakoko and the various dialects of Bassa origin, Duala is tending bit by bit to superimpose itself on these and to be the commercial and official language of the Circonscriptions of Nkongsamba and Yabassi and the Subdivisions of Edea and N'Dikinimeki...grouping 200,000 individuals."²² This was attributed, rightly, to the Protestant Mission's extensive use of Duala. The continual use of their language in church helped the Dualas combine traditional and modern culture as they did.

One example of this synthesis of old and new is the development of the Dualas' voluntary associations, the miemba (singular muemba). By the Mandate period there were two sorts: Age-Sets, groups of people born in the same year or within two years of each other, and the Tribal or Clan Associations. Both were important social organisations, helping people by giving them something to belong to

21. Annual Report 1933, p. 89.

22. *ibid.*, p. 91.

and aiming particularly to help them face modern life against a background of tradition.

The Musango ma Bonadoo, an association of the Bells, said its aim was to help the authorities in "the accomplishing of the great work of civilisation," and to seek "the social and moral progress of the country, as well as the material condition of the natives," among the whole Duala community, not only the Bonadoo.²³ Its announcement in 1934, saying all this, also said Africans were not sufficiently grateful to the white man for his efforts to civilise them. These were almost servile words of flattery, and in 1935 the new Chairman of the association, the Customs officer Michel Epee "Papa" (1900-1975), declared on taking office, "Long live the French administration! Long live Cameroun! Long live the Bonadoo!"²⁴ But behind such words lay a more subtle attitude.

Michel Epee also said, "The chiefs will have in us a consultative chamber, the people will have us as an intermediary, and the high Administration asks for no more than to have in us a trusted interpreter."²⁴ This well expresses what seems to have been the Dualas' outlook then: after unsuccessful confrontation, compromise must be sought — but true compromise, with the people's leaders and spokesmen making their wishes known to the government, not only vice versa. Insofar as miemba had this aim and also the one of reviving interest in traditions, their

23. L'Eveil des Camerouniens, 10 Sept. 1934.

24. L'Eveil des Camerouniens, 1 June 1935.

ideas were similar to, but not the same as the government's. Studying the Bell Dualas' traditions was certainly one aim of the Musango ma Bonadoo.²⁵

The Bonadoo also had a special cultural association, different from ordinary miemba, the Idubwan a Belle Belle. Like the Musango ma Bonadoo it included the Bonaberi as well as their cousins the Bonadoo; the Idubwan a Belle Belle was in fact based at Bonaberi. It organised plays to illustrate Duala history and its great achievement was the writing of the history of the Duala people, in Duala, completed about 1930.²⁶ For many years the chairman was a tribal elder and fisherman, Ndoumbe Eboue.²⁷

Akwa's counterpart to the Musango ma Bonadoo was the Jemea la Bonambela ("Akwa loyalty"), an association for entertainment, mutual aid and other purposes.²⁸ Mutual aid seems to have been a general aim of miemba. Deido (Bonebela) had two associations. Ebele o Basu ("Deido forward") was an association organising meetings and parties, which may have composed the Deido anthem; there were also Bell and Akwa anthems. Possibly begun under the Germans, about 1927 it split into two, the breakaway branch being called Ebele Mbale ("Deido Truth"); the two were rivals until they both died out in or about the late 1930s.²⁹ Deido association members wore khaki uniforms, so that people used to refer to Bonebela mabole kaki, "the Deido people who wear khaki;" the Bell and Akwa associations wore white uniforms.³⁰

25. Interview, Michel Epee.

26. M. Doumbe-Moulongo, Les Dualas; p.2; Gouellain, Douala, p.56ff.

27. Interview, Louis Mbappe.

28. Interview, Jacques Kuoh Moukouri.

29. Doumbe-Moulongo, op.cit., p. 110.

30. Report "No. 111 131" (no other specification) in ORSTOM files, Yaounde: an isolated document apparently from the archives.

The Age-Sets, a very old institution, had now been reformed to include among their purposes the inculcation of standards, to some extent based on European ones. An unsigned note written about them in 1934, apparently by a French official, said their aims were always practical and their members were usually, though not always, youths of from 15 to 20.³⁰ It added that their membership was irrespective of class, tribe or origin; certainly it cut across the division into "Cantons," for Soppo Priso of Bell and Léopold Moume Etia of Deido (after his return from France) both belonged to one association, Mon'a Muemba, having been born in the same year, 1913.³¹

The note just mentioned said the Age-Sets included some European-style innovations such as written statutes, and had officers: secretary, inspector, treasurer (there were membership subscriptions), etc. It went on to give details of organisation which seem to have been derived from the examples of both the Age-Sets and some other associations (of clerks, for example) not otherwise described in the document. Office-holders were elected with modern methods: ballot papers and boxes, and polling booths. The voting led to "palavers and discussions"; the founder was Chairman, and he appointed his friends to other offices; meetings on the filling of posts "are in general very agitated, and on these occasions is revealed the taste of the black man for grandiloquent, pointless discussions..." Generally an association held meetings in

31. Interview, Léopold Moume Etia.

a member's house, but it could be in the open air; at meetings attended by about fifty people there were "disorder and confusion worthy of the French Lower Chamber."³⁰

Some associations kept minutes; the unknown author of the note enclosed an extract from the minutes of a meeting arranging the funeral of a member, named Mouandjo, of the Moudy Association of Akwa.* An important function of such bodies in many parts of the world is to arrange and pay for members' funerals. For this and other purposes the Duala miemba raised money by subscriptions and fines.

There were probably very many small associations formed especially by younger educated Dualas. In Akwa, in 1933, an organisation called Elokou a Muemba ya Bonambela was formed for boys born between 1915 and 1918 and girls born between 1918 and 1924, for them to know and help each other and put forward progressive ideas. In 1940 there was formed a Kod'a Muemba ya Bana ba Bonambela, also in Akwa, for men of 23 to 25, helping them with, for example, allocations of 100 francs for a marriage and 250 for a burial.³²

Clearly the miemba existed mainly as social organisations for younger Dualas, for parties, organisation of plays (very popular among the Dualas, and organised by the Musango ma Bonadoo for example), and other social events, but most of all for helping members to adapt to conditions strongly influenced by European and

* It is not in the file now.

32. J. Guilbot, "Les Conditions de Vie des Indigènes de Douala," Etudes Camerounaises 27-8, Sept.-Dec. 1949, p. 207-8.

above all French culture. There can be no doubt that it was a spontaneous sort of organisation. The official who wrote the report in 1934 clearly saw the miemba as a semi-secret institution which needed to be investigated. He even said they were comparable to the Freemasons and Carbonari — something of an exaggeration. He suggested that the statutes shown to Europeans may not have told all, and the expenses also may have been partially concealed from white men.

The government, however, showed favour to at least some associations. Jean Michel, the Chef de Circonscription and Delegate, was patron of the Musango ma Bonadoo. And he lent his patronage to a remarkable occasion organised by two voluntary associations on 9 December 1934.

This was a spectacular celebration of the 37th birthday of Prince Alexandre Douala Manga Bell, held at Bonaberi a few days after the actual day. The two associations were the Male ma N 'Dumb'a Duala and Muemba ma Nyango Andree, the latter named after his wife. On Dec. 8 these organised a march down the main street of Bonasama, "to the sound of the Bonadoo anthem;" then, the subsequent press report said, there was a torchlight procession and all-night singing "to the accompaniment of two bands and guitars." One franc was charged for admission to a preliminary party, where sandwiches and other refreshments were served. Then, at 8 a.m. on Dec. 9, the beach at Bonaberi was crowded for the landing of Prince Alexandre and M. Michel with other guests of honour, filling two

steam launches. A canoe race was held, and a religious service where Pastor Rusillon preached. A ceremony was held under the historic Bongongi ba Belle Belle, the baobab tree under which rulers of the Bonadoo had been crowned and Ndoumb'a Douala himself had, at the age of 4, been the object of another ceremony in 1902. Later people went to the Prince's house at Bali, where the anthems of Bell, Akwa, Deido and France were played.³³

The report of this event written by Michel Epee in L'Eveil des Camerouniens is full of interest. More remarkable than the popular veneration of Prince Alexandre, something of a symbol of tradition for all his modern-style accomplishments, was the ceremony – whatever it actually was – under the baobab tree, and the presence there of the senior French government representative. The Bonadoo were out to show their acceptance of Ndoumb'a Douala as the real "King," and the French to show that they did not mind him being considered so. This indicated their cultivation of the prince at this time, which can be linked with other signs of positive official interest in traditions, chieftancy included.

More will be said later about the growing official attention paid to Ndoumb'a Douala. In 1934, however, the prince clashed with the government over his land. As the government, for all its favouring of him, opposed him on his land claim, this case must have raised still further the Prince's standing among the Bonadoo. The report on the case given later, and now in the French Colonial Ministry

33. L'Eveil des Camerouniens 10 January 1935.

archives, does not fully explain the details. Certainly Ndoumb'a Douala started in 1934 by claiming constatation of customary-law rights over seven plots of land, all with buildings on them, which had been occupied by the administration for twenty years. The government opposed his claim on the grounds of "effective occupation," and on 28 Feb. 1935 the Douala Court of First Instance upheld its case and rejected Alexandre's.³⁴

However, a decree of 30 June 1935, applied by Arrê^é of 2 Feb. 1936 in Cameroun, placed that territory under the jurisdiction of the Court of Appeal of French Equatorial Africa, abolishing the separate Appeal Court of French Cameroun. Prince Alexandre then appealed to the court in Brazzaville, and won.³⁴ This was on 5 March 1937.

More needs to be studied about this triumph of Ndoumb'a Douala over the French in the courts, for it is a puzzling case. The seven plots of land had all been inherited from his father by the prince in 1914. Presumably the French occupation of them had been a part of the general occupation of land seized by the Germans in 1914, the plots having been covered by the Bonanjo expropriation. But how, in that case, could the French occupation of the land claimed by Prince Alexandre be ruled illegal, as it clearly was, without the entire French occupation of the land seized by the Germans in 1914 being also overruled? Research is necessary to determine how the court in 1937 conceded the

34. Commissioner Brunot to Minister, 16 Dec. 1938, and related handwritten note on case; Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM, Paris.

prince's claim without upsetting the verdict of the Conseil du Contentieux in 1932 and accepting the whole case fruitlessly argued for years by the Bonadoo. It is possible that the French occupation of that land had been separate from the other, wider occupation of the land expropriated in 1914; though it is hard to see on what other grounds they could have occupied it.

Anyway, his triumph in his land case was another step on Prince Alexandre Douala Manga Bell's way to becoming the outstanding figure of the Duala elite and an unofficial leader of the whole Duala community. He had become something like that by the later 1930s, partly, no doubt, because the anti-colonial movement from which he had stood aloof had proved useless, leaving his alternative course, of greater collaboration, the only one apparently likely to lead anywhere.

Prince Alexandre's mother, Emma Engome, died in November 1936, apparently at almost the same moment as Mandessi Bell. Her death was as momentous an event as that of Mandessi, and probably the funerals were on different days so that the Bell people could attend both. The funeral on 15 Nov. 1936 of Emma Engome, daughter of the British seaman Dayas, was attended by Jean Michel.

The Population and the non-Duala elements.

Much is known about the Dualas at this period, as one would expect as the period is so recent, but one thing

which is not known for certain is their numbers. There were conflicting figures in the official census in different years. In 1928 the Duala population was assessed at 13,661; in 1933, 15,839.³⁵ In 1935 the population of the four Duala "Cantons" was assessed, in a census carried out from 22 July to 20 Sept., at 18,499.³⁶ But in 1936-37 the estimate of the Duala tribe's population was 21,022.³⁵ Yet the 1929 Circonscription Annual Report had said the number was already about 20,000 then.³⁷

The unreliability of the census figures has already been demonstrated. Dualas could not evade counting as easily as the immigrants, but some may have succeeded in doing so. But the discrepancies in figures may also have been due to doubts or confusion about who was a Duala and who was not. Most Strangers were by now in New-Bell but not all, and the social subjection of some of them to Dualas in Akwa and Deido had for long led to assimilation. In 1929, according to Cortade, assimilation of Bakokos and Betis into the Duala community was still going on.³⁷ Other Sawa had always been even more easily assimilated.³⁸ Did the censuses count as Dualas such people as Paul Sonne (Mungo), Max Mpacko (Abo), Pastor Jocky (Malimba), and the Protestant Mission worker Eugen Ngile (Pongo-Songo), or not?

Such ambiguities may have complicated assessment of the Dualas' numbers. Thus it is difficult to judge the

35. Gouellain, op.cit., p. 220.

36. Isolated document in ORSTOM library, Yaounde.

37. p. 22-3; file APA 10005/A, Cameroon Archives.

38. R. Bureau, "Ethno-Sociologie Religieuse des Dualas et Apparentés," Recherches et Etudes Camerounaises 1962, parts 1 and 2, p. 27ff.

French official view that the Dualas' rate of natural increase was too low. Because of this persistent idea Douala Circonscription was one of those where mothers of young children were at first exempt from the head-tax. That exemption was ended in 1931 as recorded in Chapter Four. But in the previous year more than half the women in the Circonscription were reported as having no children under 7 years old, and although this was officially blamed on venereal disease and poor post-natal care, possibly the earlier fear of resort by women to contraception or abortion because of the burden of the head-tax may have had some foundation. In 1933 the French law of 1920 against abortion was extended to Cameroun,³⁹ but it had always been punishable there. In the same year some European women headed by Bonnacarrère's wife started an Oeuvre du Berceau Indigène, a voluntary but government-aided organisation to promote maternal and child health among Africans, not only in Douala. But the concern may have been exaggerated. The infant death rate may have been even higher then than now, when it is still very high, but it is likely even then to have been below average among the Dualas. Their birth rate may also have been below average, but they have continued to have large families, and in 1935 the census figure for the four Duala Cantons included 7,387 children, about 40 per cent of the total: a normal enough figure.

In 1935 Douala Circonscription was renamed the Wouri Region. The population of the Region was assessed

39. JOC 15 July 1933.

at 29,469 inhabitants.⁴⁰ The small rural population included in this was then assessed at 1,780 Bassas in 18 villages and 647 Bakokos in 7 villages. The villages were still separated by miles of bush from the city (in which some are now absorbed), but linked with it administratively, with their chiefs and elders sitting on the Circonscription Conseil des Notables. For many years the Bassas were ruled by Njo Lembe and the Bakokos by Ndokat Nongue, who for some time was treated as the senior, being given the title Chef de Région (until 1934) and appointed a registrar of births, deaths and marriages.

Moïse Njo Lembe died on 14 April 1935.⁴¹ He was buried at his village of Ndokobong, where he had been chief since before 1914. Pastor Itondo conducted the funeral service and Betote Akwa gave an address. Relations had changed since the days of Betote Akwa's father; now the ruler of Akwa had, at least officially, to admit as a fellow paramount chief, of legally equal rank, the ruler of a small group of people once subject to the Akwas. The successor to Njo Lembe was his son, Isaac Moussongo.⁴²

In the city other Bassas, including Bakokos, probably continued migrating to Douala at a steady rate, with Betis and other Strangers, regardless of the Depression. In times of job shortage it is normal for each person to think he will be one of the lucky ones to land a job, and the migration of Camerounians to Douala may have continued as steadily as the recorded migration to British Cameroons, and for the same

40. P. Chauleur (ed.), L'Oeuvre de la France au Cameroun, population appendix.

41. La Gazette du Cameroun no. 118, 15 Oct. 1935

42. Interview, André Njo, Pierre Penda and Bruno Ditourou Eyoun, Douala-Bassa.

reasons of rural poverty and oppression.

In 1934 a Circular from the newly appointed Commissioner, Jules-Vincent Répique^t, spoke of the difficulties of the police in controlling Africans in Douala, and called for stricter application of the regulations on movement to that city.⁴³ The Annual Report for that year said, "The struggle against vagrancy was pursued tenaciously in the principal urban centres and the coastal Circonscriptions which still attract the young elements of many tribes of the interior," but there had been no "sudden and systematic sending back," and those with jobs or engaged in farming were never hit.⁴⁴ In early 1936, however, Répique^t felt it necessary to call for "discernment" and tolerance in sending back migrants and ending vagrancy, with tolerance towards those who were working for employers or helping to cultivate crops, if they regularised their position.⁴⁵ This suggests that police action against "vagrants" from the interior was frequent and harsh, but that does not at all mean that it was effective. The figure for the 1935 population quoted above was probably well below the real one.

The influx of Bamilekes which was to be so important in Douala's subsequent history began in the 1930s. There had been Bamilekes for some time in Douala, but there is evidence of increased migration from this time by that vigorous and enterprising people on the mountain slopes north of Nkongsamba. Various studies have been made of the phenomenon

43. Circular by Commissioner, 20 July 1934; addressed to Chefs de Circonscription Douala, Yabassi, Edea and Nkongsamba; file APA 11326/B, Cameroon Archives.

44. Annual Report 1934, p. 38.

45. Circular of 1 May 1936; Annual Report 1936, p. 206.

of Bamileke migration.⁴⁶ They show that their homeland, where they grow oil palms and kola nut trees and rear chickens, goats, sheep and pigs, became too crowded for them some time ago. The men were for various reasons free to migrate, and like the Ibos, to whom they have many resemblances, the Bamilekes are said to have a social system favourable to the enterprising individual who, because of land shortage in both cases, has for long sought his fortune in migration.

Bamilekes traded to Nkongsamba, Douala, and other places, and then began to emigrate for longer periods, first to local centres such as Bafoussam and Dschang, then to the Mungo valley, where many worked on plantations and later bought some from their owners. In 1931 some Bamilekes were allowed to move on to land earlier seized and kept by their neighbours and traditional enemies the Bamouns, but this did not ease the land pressure much and migration continued. Many Bamilekes went westwards to British Cameroons. By 1932 there were officially 1,432 in Douala.⁴⁷ Their migration there may at first have been an extension of their long-distance trade organisation, which has been typically based on the chieftancies of the home country, with Bafoussam men organising the kola nut trade, for example.⁴⁸ By the mid-1930s the Sacred Heart Fathers missionary Père Albert noted that the Bamilekes now used lorries for trade;

46. C.Tardits, *Les Bamiléké de l'Ouest Cameroun* (pp.59ff., 85-103); J.Hurault, *La Structure Sociale des Bamiléké* (p.127); R.Delarozière, "Les Institutions Politiques et Sociales des Populations dites Bamilekes," *Etudes Camerounaises* no.27, Sept.-Dec.1949 (p.20ff.).

47. Tardits, *op.cit.*, p. 90-1.

48. Delarozière, *op.cit.*, p.21.

people went to Nkongsamba and other places, and sold chickens, eggs, beans and groundnuts.⁴⁹

Albert said that, "Many chieftancies, like those of Banjoun, Bameka, Bayangam and Bakam, are overpopulated. The excess population pours out nowadays towards the British zone and towards Dschang, Bafang, Nkongsamba, Mbanga, Bonaberi, Douala..."⁵⁰ About the same time, about 1936, a British visitor to Bangangte said that, "a continual emigration goes on towards Douala and the plantations lining the railway from Douala to Nkongsamba where labour is always in great demand. The Bamileke seem to wander all over the western parts of the Cameroons."⁵¹

In a few years the Bamilekes in Douala advanced to a powerful position in petty trade. This process, one of the most important in the later Mandate period in Douala, is little documented, but a very interesting piece in L'Eveil du Cameroun at the end of 1936 shows how far it had gone:

"In Africa – in Senegal and in Guinea particularly – business^{*} complains of the Syrians; elsewhere, it is the Greeks, who seek to monopolise all retail trade; elsewhere again it is the Indian, the Chinese who is accused of messing up prices. But in Cameroun, the Grassfield monopolises trade, not to sell at the lowest price but, on the contrary, at the highest price." He was a born businessman; he might be a "market-boy" selling salt, cigarettes, etc.; "he was for

* = the expatriate firms.

49. P. Albert, Bandjoun: Croyances, Coutume, Folklore, 1937, p. 133-4.

50. *ibid.*, p. 45.

51. F.C. Egerton, African Majesty, 1938, p. 73.

long the only one to bring us small livestock, chickens, and ducks; he was also the only one to sell sweet potatoes and groundnuts." Nearly all the tailors and cobblers were "Grassfields," the article went on, and many operated as moneylenders. The Douala Grassfields had "mutual aid societies, saving banks for tax payment, in short, real co-operatives." The article concluded with a crude appeal to popular sentiment against such traders: "The Grassfield, the one who dictates high prices, he is the enemy. Readers, you have been warned: you must fight against him – if you can!"⁵²

The article noted the mutual aid efforts which have been a key to the Bamilekes' success. They use the circulating contribution club which they call jangi. Another article spoke of an organisation called buïancel ("buy and sell"). It also said Bamileke fish traders turned police harassment of fishermen for papiers to their advantage.⁵³ The Bamilekes were said in 1938 to have eliminated the Hausas from petty trade in Douala,⁵⁴ but the Hausas still traded there and the Bamilekes had not yet reached their present position. There were still other Africans in the transport business in which the Bamilekes were later to have a virtual monopoly.

Besides traders some Bamilekes now worked outside their homeland as office staff, thanks to education provided above all by the Protestant Mission. Paul Monthe, a farmer's son born on 15 Oct. 1914 at Bana, was educated for a time at

52. L'Eveil du Cameroun 8 Oct. 1936.

53. L'Eveil du Cameroun 23 April 1937.

54. Wouri Region Annual Report 1938, quoted Gouellain, op.cit., p.251-2.

Ndoungue and then worked as a clerk at the Chamber of Commerce at Douala in the later 1930s. Thirty years later he was back there as President of the Chamber, having become one of the top Cameroonian businessmen.⁵⁵

An Arrêté of 29 July 1933 modified the membership of the Douala Circonscription Conseil de Notables to provide specifically for representation of some of the immigrant tribes. These were to have six representatives, one each of the Bamilekes; the "Yaoundes" and Boulous; the Bassas and Batangas; the Bakokos; the Yabassis, Ngoumbas, Makas and Bafias; and the Baboutes, Bamouns, Arabs and Hausas.⁵⁶ It was a strange arrangement making little allowance for ethnic affinities. The Bakokos are really Bassas, while the Batangas, a Sawa tribe, are quite distinct; the Bandems, called "Yabassis," are close to the Bassas, the Ngoumbas to the Betis and Boulous; the Arabs were probably Chad Arabs, specifically mentioned in other documents as being in Douala then, and the Hausas were from Nigeria, which makes it strange that they should have been grouped with Cameroonian tribes. This latter grouping may have been based on a common religion, but the others made no sense.*

At the end of 1933, by Arrêté of 24 December, the Strangers' chieftancies were grouped into two new Paramount Chieftancies, one for "New-Bell: Etrangers à Douala" and one for "New-Bell: Etrangers au Cameroun." This showed that

* They may, however, have been based on the geographical layout of ethnic districts.

55. Interview, Paul Monthe.

56. JOC 15 August 1933.

New-Bell, although the Bell Dualas still owned the land there, was regarded by the authorities as the Strangers' area; with the continuing influx the majority had in fact probably been there for some time, and in 1935-36 many Strangers still in Akwa and Deido were moved into New-Bell.⁵⁷

On 25 Jan. 1934 Mar^ecus Eteme, a former labourer from Efok who had been the first Chief of the "Yaounde people" in Douala, was appointed Paramount Chief of the "Strangers to Douala." Living near the present New-Bell Catholic mission, he was a leading figure in the immigrant community, though his position as chief of the Betis had been contested earlier because of differences between the Etons, of whom he was one, and the Ewondos.⁵⁸

Joseph Paraiso, Chief of the Dahomeans, was appointed Paramount Chief of the "Strangers to Cameroun" at the same time. A very well known personality in Douala, he was a successful poultry farmer who at the Douala Exhibition and Fair of 1936 exhibited chickens and turkeys, including crosses of local and French breeds; he had a maize flour mill also, which led to his appointment as an industrial to the Chamber of Commerce, and won the Mérite Agricole, a new award given to Africans.⁵⁹ He was one of Douala's small Muslim community, which during the 1930s (at any rate by early 1940) acquired its first mosque.

Among the lesser Stranger chiefs, Simon Djengue, a cocoa farmer and trader, was Chief of the Bamilekes in

57. Gouellain, op.cit., p. 232.

58. Interview, Michel Ndzama, Douala.

59. L'Eveil du Cameroun 15 April 1936.

the 1930s. As chief of the Bassas and Bakokos Thomas Umatimbehe was succeeded by Henri Tonye, a wood carver, who, however, was sacked in 1936 after being sentenced by the Second-Degree Court;⁶⁰ he is said to have been convicted of tax embezzlement.⁶¹ He was replaced by Pierre Nje, a railway worker.⁶¹

"Douala, ce grand village."

What sort of general picture did Douala, now one of the major West African seaports, present in the 1930s? Europeans were, as in previous years, quite impressed.

Jean Martet, in his book Les Bâtitseurs de Royaumes written after a visit in 1933, wrote, "Douala is a very attractive town, and very pleasant..." He referred to the new Boulevard Maritime, along the river bank in Akwa, noting that the French still called it "le Beach," and other parts of the town, with admiring comments.⁶² His lively description of the town concentrates mainly on the white community but has interesting observations on the Africans.

Commissioner Bonnacarrère paid a tribute to the city when inaugurating the new Native Hospital in Akwa in 1934: "See a town like Douala, its wharves, its streets, its shops, its sports grounds, its public buildings, its schools, its big government departments; move on to New-Bell station when a train arrives and look at that crowd of

60. Décision of 15 July 1936, recorded in La Gazette du Cameroun 15 Aug. 1936.

61. Interview, Gabriel Libom and Pierre Penda, Bruno Ditourou Eyoun and André Njo.

62. J. Martet, Les Bâtitseurs de Royaumes, p. 110ff.

employees, houseboys, schoolchildren comfortably dressed, its clean streets, its neatly laid out huts where you will find the saucepan, the lamp, the mirror, the multi-coloured wrapper unloaded from the holds of our ships.*⁶³

The visiting Protestant missionary Daniel Couve wrote in 1936, "We look, we listen, we admire, while one of the two cars of the Mission shows us Douala, a splendid town which extends all along the Wouri, a lively town where representatives of all the tribes of the interior meet, the gateway to a big country..."⁶⁴

Descriptions of the people of Douala show that then, as for some time, they were typically dressed in Western style, though some men still wore the wrapper as older Dualas, at home, still do. An article in 1936 said Akwa people dressed like Europeans at work, but like Dualas on Sunday, and added, "if you see native couples better dressed and smart, they are Strangers, 'non-Dualas'"⁶⁵; an odd statement, as many immigrants were poorly-paid labourers— perhaps the writer was judging from a few well-off Nigerians or Senegalese he had seen. He added that some of the elite wore bell-bottom trousers ("Oxford bags," no doubt) and pince-nez or dark glasses, while the apache look was popular among young clerks. But he thought women were uglily dressed, with some wearing "unhygienic sacs montants imposed by the prudish Missions." Later the British traveller F.C. Egerton saw women in Douala "dressed in cotton prints from Britain, France, Czechoslovakia,

63. Speech reproduced in JOC 1 July 1934.

64. JME 1936, p. 563-4.

65. L'Eveil du Cameroun 23 July 1936.

Belgium and Japan."⁶⁶

Some of the better-off and smarter Africans bought motor-cycles or even cars at this time. For 1932 there is a list of vehicles, "roadworthy, under repair or capable of repair" in French Cameroun on Oct. 15 of that year, including many owned by Africans. In Douala J. Moussinga had a BSA motor-cycle, F. Bekombo a Gnome et Rhône motor-cycle, Bwele Mongue a Chevrolet, Monny Dika a Peugeot motor-cycle, James Moukoko an AJS motor-cycle, Samuel Ebongue a Chevrolet van; among non-Dualas, Eteme had a Chevrolet van, Martin Mbody (from one of the local Bassa villages) a Terrot motor-cycle, Mme. Olayinka (a Nigerian or the wife of one) a Ford car, and Michel Foudah, from his name apparently a Beti, a BSA.⁶⁷ The motor vehicle population of Douala was already quite large. Most people probably still travelled on foot, by bicycle, or across the river by canoe or ferry; for the Douala-Bonaberi ferry Blaise's monopoly and fare (1.50 franc each way) were often criticised.⁶⁸

In contrast to the spreading construction of good modern houses, much of the population was poor and therefore badly housed, particularly in New-Bell. L'Eveil du Cameroun spoke continually of slum conditions, not only in New-Bell. In 1934 it said,

"Some native districts of Akwa, Deido and New-Bell are the shame of Douala: nests of rats, snakes, fleas, ticks, flies, mosquitoes, where we are attacked by tuberculosis, yellow fever, typhus, cholera, plague, dysentery, yaws.

66. Egerton, op.cit., p. 18.

67. List in file APA 11325/E, Cameroon Archives.

68. Chamber of Commerce Bulletin, Sept. 1935.

Public opprobrium in New-Bell must be turned on the districts of the Liberians, the Babutus (sic), the Yesoums, the Yekabas and the Bamilekes – and even in Akwa all the district between the rues Aymérich, Galliéni and Joffre. – In some districts of New-Bell the natives are dangerously overcrowded; but empty lands are not lacking behind New-Bell."⁶⁹

More in this vein was often written in the columns of that newspaper, especially in the regular column "Douala: ce grand village." Like much of the paper this seems to have been written by the editor, Eugène Schneider, whose irascible nature is discernible behind much of the paper's news and comments, which were not separated. On public health the newspaper seems to have thought that the strenuous efforts of the government, with all its myriad regulations imposed on Africans by constant harassment, were not enough.

In fact those measures (such as a new Arrêté in 1933) probably were either sufficient or not so necessary as was thought, for Douala was not such a den of disease as L'Eveil made out. Despite its low-lying and flat site and heavy rains, it was probably one of the least unhealthy parts of French Cameroun. Africans not only had medical treatment free, or rather paid for out of taxes – the medical assistance tax was abolished in 1934 but the head-tax was raised to include the same amount⁷⁰ – but also, in Douala, a number of places where treatment was actually available. Besides dispensaries and a maternity clinic there was, from 1934, the new Native Hospital, opened on June 30

69. L'Eveil du Cameroun 1 Feb. 1934.

70. Arrêté 10 Oct. 1934, JOC 15 Nov. 1934.

that year by Bonnacarrère. It is the modern Laquintinie Hospital in Akwa, renamed in 1941 after a medical officer who died on the Free French expedition to Libya.

New-Bell was often mentioned in documents at this time, and later, primarily as a dirty slum. A more positive picture was given in 1937 by a priest of the Holy Ghost Fathers mission which so many people in New-Bell followed. Fr. Basset said the "Yaoundes" in New-Bell had long, low houses with several families in each, the Bassas small ones containing one household each, and the Bamilekes wide houses with partitions, in which several tenants lived. He said the immigrants modified some of their customs in Douala; for example, Bamileke women wore clothes there. But Bamileke talking drums and Hausa guitars were found in Douala, and Ewondo wrestlers. Tribalism was strong according to this missionary, who, however, may like other Europeans have overstressed incidents he saw, such as Bamileke drivers "happy when a Bamoun falls off a lorry."⁷¹ The Catholic Mission said Ewondos would not learn Bassa,⁷² but both Ewondo and Bassa came to be widely understood by non-native speakers, in Douala as elsewhere, while non-Dualas living in Douala have often learned Duala.

Douala off duty.

Sport and entertainment are regularly mentioned in the press of the time and in reminiscences and documents.

71. Père Basset in Le Bulletin des Missions, 4th quarter 1937, p. 91.

72. Chronique des Missions 1931-33, p.85.

Modern versions were fast growing but old sports were far from dead. Traditional wrestling remained very popular among the Dualas, and so did canoe racing. There are countless references to canoe races, pembisan, from the 19th century. That was their time of greatest development, when the boats raced from Suellaba roads to the Beseke mouth. In the German period the races were held once a year, on the Kaiser's birthday, Jan. 27. Under the French they were held twice yearly, on Bastille Day and Armistice Day.

The canoe races⁷³ were much influenced by the old Duala religion, with traditional rites including divination for the benefit of the crews on the night before the event. But after the conversion of most Dualas to Christianity a pastor normally came to pray for the crews on the morning of the race. A family at Jebale, however, retained the exclusive control of rites to summon the miengu to help the races. The canoes were between 20 and 28 metres long, made of Pterocarpus tree trunks, with no keels; each had a name. The figureheads, elaborately carved by skilled craftsmen, could be in the form of human beings or real or legendary animals and birds.

An article signed "Un Douala Français" in 1937 said the races had been organised among the Bonadoo since 1919 by an Association formed, for mutual aid and promotion of business, before the return of Ndoumb'a Douala. This muemba may have been the Alexanderbund of 1919, or another one formed in honour of the prince. The article said it

73. See full account in P. Harter, "Les Courses de Pirogues Coutumiers chez les Dualas," Recherches et Etudes Camerounaises 1960, no. 1, p. 71ff.

had paid-up members and income from gifts and collections, and thus paid for training of canoe crews, who were usually fishermen. The canoeists had an elaborate hierarchy, with captains, other ranking officers, and crewmen, the local chief being traditionally the honorary Commander. Each crew had a captain, a "swimming chief," five team leaders, and four teams of ten men each, with one or two more teams sometimes added. Active canoeists were between 20 and 30 years old. In principle every district had its own canoe. The writer of this article said, "The Federation of canoeists, the Alexandre and André Association (sic), and the Bonadoo Tribe Peace Association have the same aim..."⁷⁴ He made it clear that the races among the Bonadoo were linked with the miemba and particularly with the cult-figure of Ndoumb'a Douala.

That article may well have been written by Ndoumb'a Douala, who had by then applied for French citizenship (to be accorded in 1939) and could well call himself "a French Duala." He certainly took a prominent part in the canoe races. At the 1934 Armistice Day races he took a paddle himself and trained the other crewmen of his boat, the Ndumb'a Bolo (Ndumbe's Canoe); it won the main race,⁷⁵ and there is no reason to suspect "fixing" as he was by all accounts a man of varied talents. In the special races for his birthday shortly afterwards the newspaper report did not mention him as joining the crew of the Ndumb'a Bolo, but it referred, without naming her, to a girl of 15 who was present to encourage the crew and was called the "Siren of the

74. "La Fédération Ancestrale des Piroguiers de Douala," L'Eveil du Cameroun 23 Nov. 1937.

75. L'Eveil des Camerouniens 10 Nov. 1934.

Ndumb'a Bolo."⁷⁶ Earlier the prince had ordered "reparation" after a fight between Bonaberi and Bonendale people over the 1934 Bastille Day races; it is not clear whether the fight, in which fists, spears and canoe paddles were used, was between the crews, or fans, or both.⁷⁷

Horse racing was popular in Douala, and Prince Alexandre competed. Football was in the 1930s fast becoming the passion it now is in Cameroon. Blaise Diagne is said to have urged the authorities in 1932 to encourage football among the Africans.⁷⁸ They did so, after years of official disapproval of the efforts of Goethe George and others to develop local football teams. The Union Sportive Indigène de Douala (USID), founded in 1926 by George, Ebole Bile and Mpondo Dika, was now "taken over" officially;⁷⁹ it had a committee of four Europeans (including Lalanne as secretary) and four Africans.

Besides sport, dancing was a taste well provided for in Douala. Fischer and Nassif ran bars plus dance halls for Africans. Doumbe-Moulongo recalls⁸⁰ that the Maringa was brought to Douala by Gold Coast immigrants in the 19th century and was apparently related to High-Life; it was danced "until 1935 at the latest," as was the Ambas-Be, a sort of quadrille introduced from the Ambas Bay area about 1910 and danced to guitar accompaniment (presumably it was from Victoria). The Ashiko (from Pidgin "I'm shake"), a fast dance introduced in the 1920s from Lagos,

76. L'Eveil des Camerouniens 10 Jan. 1935

77. L'Eveil des Camerouniens 10 Aug. 1934

78. Interview, Jacques Kuoh Moukouri.

79. Interviews, Goethe George, Albert Mpondo Dika.

80. M. Doumbe-Moulongo, "Musique et Danse chez les Dualas", Abbia, no. 22, Yaounde May-August 1969.

remained popular for long in the Douala area, where a local version called the Yakayaka grew up; the Ashiko is recalled as "a particularly vibrating form of the West Indian biguine or the merengue."⁸⁰ The biguine and merengue were adopted some time ago in Douala, as were the tango, waltz, foxtrot and (modern) bolero. Jazz was noted by a visitor in 1933.⁸¹

A reference in 1933 to a Bakoko or Yaounde "gentleman" playing waltzes, blues and other tunes on an old accordion at the (all-European) Grand Hôtel reminds one that leisure for some means income for others.⁸² The playing of musical instruments was an admired skill. The traditional harp-guitar was dying out by then, but flutes called isese were still made from the branches of the pawpaw tree;⁸⁰ modern guitars were popular, and Prince Alexandre was an accomplished pianist. The gramophone or fono was spreading.

Fischer's establishment in Akwa was said to be a haunt of prostitutes;⁸³ one can believe that this was so, and that prostitution was the casual free-lance affair it usually is in Africa, in contrast to the large-scale business it is in Europe. The government tried by an Arrêté of 25 October 1933 to introduce controlled legalised brothels in Cameroun, with a register of prostitutes who would have weekly inspections for venereal disease. The measure may have been aimed at controlling such disease.

81. Martet, op.cit., p. 205.

82. L'Eveil du Cameroun 15 Nov. 1933.

83. L'Eveil des Camerouniens 10 Aug. 1934

But it went against traditional ways and was probably unenforceable from the start. Paraiso complained that initially police looking for unlicensed pimps arrested everyone,⁸⁴ not surprisingly if there were no real pimps but just numerous men offering to find girls for others. In 1934 many Douala prostitutes, presumably not subject to the regulations, set out for Yaounde for the Fair and Exhibition there, but were turned back.⁸⁵ In 1947 the authorities were to report that Cameroun had no maisons tolérées.⁸⁶

Continued Dissent in Church and State.

The acquiescence of Dualas under French rule after the failure of the major protest activity was not complete or unconditional. It seems, in fact, that the revived Baptist Church agitation reached a peak between 1932 and 1934. However, a close study of this, using the Cameroon Archives, is needed to determine exactly what happened then, as the published material gives a confused picture.

It is clear that the Native Baptist Church sought some sort of legal status or recognition, being unsatisfied with mere de facto freedom to operate, and that its efforts to achieve this were backed by a strong state of feeling among the Dualas, noted with alarm by the Protestant Mission.⁸⁷

84. Martet, op.cit., p. 198.

85. L'Eveil des Camerouniens 25 Aug. 1934.

86. Report to United Nations on French Cameroun, 1947, p.10.

87. JME, 2nd half of 1932, Annual Report for French Cameroun Mission; JME, 1933, p. 168.

Then an effort at a reconciliation between the NBC and the Mission was made in 1932, but unsuccessfully.⁸⁸ The breach then widened, partly because a new Decree on religion, dated 28 March 1933, made religious buildings subject to authorisation, and the Mission obtained this for the use of all the Protestant churches in Douala. The NBC, whose efforts to secure a fuller legal status may all along have been made partly with the control of existing churches in mind, challenged the allocation of churches to the Mission in the courts, but its action was dismissed on 15 May 1934.⁸⁹ The government was hostile to the NBC as always,⁹⁰ and Bonnacarrère and Michel are said to have been particularly so.⁹¹ But the Church remained free to operate in practice and in 1935 Lotin Same consecrated some pastors, including Johannes Njembele Ekwe, the Bonadoo Elder and former Customs officer.

Further research is necessary to fill out the story thus outlined of the revived NBC agitation in the early 1930s and its outcome. It is also necessary to supplement the information on political activity in those years.

The continued lack of really submissive feelings among the Dualas was indicated by their reluctance to show deference to Europeans they passed in the street, which led to a minor flurry when in 1933 Michel issued a circular

88. J.-R. Brutsch, "Origine et Développement d'une Eglise Indépendante Africaine," Le Monde Non-Chrétien no.12, Oct.-Dec. 1949, Paris; L.Moume Etia, "Lotin Same et l'Eglise Baptiste Camerounaise," La Presse du Cameroun 12 Nov. and 9 Dec. 1971, Douala; A.Mpondo Dika, A la mémoire d'Adolf Lotin Same, MS, Douala.

89. Brutsch, op.cit.; J.van Slageren, Les Origines de l'Eglise Evangélique du Cameroun, p. 195.

90. Annual Report 1933, p. 37.

91. Mpondo Dika, op.cit. and interview.

quoting with approval a European newspaper's views on the subject.⁹² It was also shown by the continued French apprehension over left-wing and German activity. The former was apparently less important after 1932; Ganty's contact with Duala radicals ended in a pathetic lawsuit over money in 1936-7,⁹³ and in 1933 the Nazi seizure of power in Germany, besides depriving many anti-colonial left-wingers of a base (including Ekwe Bile, now no longer a Communist, who had to leave Germany and in 1935 returned to Douala),⁹⁴ made many of them tone down their opposition to Britain and France because of the common Nazi-Fascist danger. The same event, however, led to increasing French fears of support in Douala for the movement for restoration of the German "lost colonies."

In 1933-34 the French uncovered a secret organisation including Dualas, some Batangas and a Malimba, all German-educated, which was called the "Kamerun Eingeboren Deutsch Gesinnten Verein", meaning, in ungrammatical or "Pidgin" German, the "Cameroun Natives' German-Thinking Union." A prominent member was Edinguele Meetom, who in 1934 escaped from his Douala hiding place to British Cameroons.⁹⁵ Others, whose role was discovered in the same year, included Peter Mukuri Bikongue and Paul Muduru

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92. Senator Lémery to Bonnacarrère, Paris 28 Nov.1933;Minister to Bonnacarrère, 28 Dec.1933; Commissioner to Minister, 23 Feb.1934; Box Cameroun AP II 29 & 30, Archives SOM,Paris.
 93. A. Owona in Revue Française d'Histoire d'Outremer, no.204, 1969, p.208n.
 94. Minister to Commissioner, 27 March 1935, file on J.E.Bile in Box Cameroun AP II 28, Archives SOM, Paris; Jumwele la Bana ba Kamerun 10 April 1935.
 95. Interview, Edinguele Meetom.

Dibongo, Akwa men like Meetom.⁹⁶ They escaped arrest, apparently fleeing to British Cameroons; Meeton may have fled there following those police discoveries. Felix Etame Joss, chief of Bonapriso and previously a clerk under the Germans and the French, was dismissed as an accomplice, and interned along with nine other people.⁹⁶

The KEDGV, whose members swore oaths to the Kaiser, was probably a sort of "old boys' association" of veterans of German government service, rather than a movement for restoration of German rule. Edinguele Meetom was probably always a true nationalist, and Mukuri Dikongue said the group arose from an earlier one which, in his description, recalls one description of the body whose leaders were imprisoned in 1930.⁹⁷ Planters, traders and urban landlords who were veterans of the German era had been at the heart of the nationalist movement and the KEDGV may simply have been a continuation of the same movement by a few of them. They may have contacted the Germans, who were suspected of having agents in Douala (Peter Firmenich of Woermann was for long suspected of being one),⁹⁸ but the Dualas must have known about the character of Nazism from people like Ekwe Bile. Even so, the French were to be very worried about "pro-Germans" among the Dualas for years.

96. Report by head of Secretariat-General, Yaounde, quoted in Répique (Commissioner) to Minister, 2 Nov. 1934; translation of German document by Mukuri Dikongue; report by head of Sûreté, Douala, Oct. 1934; Box Cameroun AP II 30, Archives SOM, Paris. Also isolated undated note in Box Cameroun AP II, Archives SOM., Paris; JOC 1 Sept. 1933, 1 Oct. 1933; J. Martet, op.cit., p.191, 291-3.

97. See note 96.

98. Bonnacarrère to Minister, 27 July 1933, Box Cameroun AP II 23, Archives SOM, Paris.

The French, the Chiefs and the Dualas

Anti-French activity was now probably confined to small groups. The general, though incomplete submission of the majority of Dualas helped produce a new stable relationship between them and their rulers, in which the chiefs were involved, in the 1930s. This was paralleled in other African colonies, where the colonial regime never seemed so eternal and established as between about 1930 and 1936, when both the British and the French were widely engaged in perfecting their mechanisms of rule over seemingly quiescent Africans through the chiefs.⁹⁹ In Douala the French took a more positive attitude to the chiefs at the same time as these were no longer being told to sign protest petitions.

Soon after assuming duty Bonnacarrère sent a Circular saying, "As you know, our administrative action in this country rests on native authority; our policy has been aiming with perseverance, for several years, in the Southern regions at least, to reorganise and strengthen that authority".¹⁰⁰ He called for each Chef de Circonscription and Chef de Subdivision to keep a list of chiefs, and said chiefs must be educated and their prestige upheld; no judicial proceedings could be started against a chief without the Commissioner's permission. Apart from saying that small chieftancies must be replaced by larger

99. See, for example, J. Suret-Canale, French Colonialism in Tropical Africa, p.323 ff.

100. Circular, Bonnacarrère to all Chefs de Circonscription, 28 Oct. 1932, reproduced in Annual Report 1932, appendix

and more powerful ones, which would go against tradition, the Circular was an indication of a policy more favourable to chiefs.

There may have been momentary doubts about applying such a policy to the Dualas. Cortade, repeating views expressed before, spoke in his Annual Report for 1932 for Douala Circonscription of the "feeble influence" of the chiefs,¹⁰¹ and the Annual Report for French Cameroun, apparently reflecting Cortade's ideas in this case, said Douala was "in fact subject to a regime of direct administration."¹⁰² As stated this was an exaggeration, no doubt based on the authorities' inclination to bypass the chiefs to get things done. Cortade's views were at one point shared by the new Commissioner, who in December 1932 wrote to him to confirm "my way of thinking on the timeliness of studying without delay for the urban centre of Douala the substitution, for a native authority system whose impotence does not need further proof, of a system of direct administration, based on the use of native staff suitably salaried and officered."¹⁰³

This idea may have been influenced by the case of the Paramount Chief of Deido, Eyoum Ekwalla, who was charged with embezzlement of tax money. On 29 Nov. 1932 Bonnacarrère told Cortade he needed more information before allowing the prosecution of Eyoum Ekwalla; he asked particularly for

101. Douala Circonscription Annual Report 1932, file APA 11757, Cameroon Archives.

102. Annual Report 1932, p.73.

103. Bonnacarrère to Cortade, 20 Dec. 1932, file APA 12395, Cameroon Archives.

information on the tax collection system.¹⁰⁴ Approval was given for the prosecution and on 29 Dec. 1932 the Paramount Chief was convicted. The Commissioner's unfavourable view of Duala chiefs at this time may also have been influenced by Lobe Bell's role in the land case before the Conseil du Contentieux, which ended on 16 November. In his letter of 20 December he asked Cortade for details of Lobe Bell's appointment, saying he had found nothing about it in the files.¹⁰³ Bonnacarrère was clearly doing his homework on the chieftancy question. The outcome was to be in line with his October 28 circular; his ideas about Douala after that were soon dropped.

On Feb. 9 1933 a décision proclaimed that "Théodore Lobe Bell, chief of the village of Bonanjo, is appointed Paramount Chief of Bell, to replace Richard Manga Bell, whose resignation has been accepted".¹⁰⁵ As Richard Bell's resignation had been accepted in 1927, and he had since died, this proclamation must have puzzled people who did not know that the new governor was evidently trying to bring some new order into the situation of chiefs. His government waited two months before dismissing Eyoun Ekwalla. This was eventually

104. Bonnacarrère to Cortade, 29 Nov. 1932, same file.

105. La Gazette du Cameroun 15 March 1933

done by a décision of 1 March 1933 which also dismissed Ntepe Priso, chief of Bonapriso, also convicted of tax embezzlement.

Two other Duala chiefs were also dismissed, for the same reason, by décisions of 12 April 1933: Maniania Nyungu, chief of Bonendale II in Bonaberi, and Essaka Ntone, chief of Bonamoudourou in Deido. This was quite a little purge; the convictions may have been correct, though Eyoun Ekwalla's offence may not have been the real reason for his removal as he had been briefly gaoled for nationalistic activity in 1931 and his successor, his uncle Eboa Epee who had already ruled Deido from 1919 to 1927, had also had a criminal conviction, for illicit alcohol dealing. But although removals of chiefs for tax embezzlement were to continue now and then (with some others quite possibly allowed to get away with the same thing), while the new Chief of Bonapriso appointed in 1933 was removed the following year for political reasons, the sackings in 1933 were not the prelude to an anti-chief policy.

On 4 Feb. 1933 a new Arrêté laid down the status of chiefs, dividing them into three groups: Paramount or "Regional" chiefs, chefs de groupement and village chiefs. Chefs de groupement were apparently appointed in other parts of the territory, and among the Dualas the main change in title was that the title Chef de Région, applied for some years hitherto to certain paramount chiefs (those of Akwa and Bonaberi), was apparently an alternative title for the Chefs Supérieurs. The real innovation of the new Arrêté was a specific provision for the choice of chiefs from the traditional families if possible with consultation. Chiefs' uniforms were also prescribed.¹⁰⁶

106. JOC 15 Feb. 1933.

In a Circular at the end of 1933 Bonnecarrère spoke of the need to educate chiefs and their sons, and added, "I would even say that so long as a feeling of social hierarchy based principally on birth remains among the peoples of Cameroun, the necessarily limited numbers attending our school establishments must be recruited, for preference, among the families of chiefs and elders."¹⁰⁷ He referred in this circular, which was published, to the north in particular; in Douala many chiefs had for long been educated men anyway. But the Circular was a further indication of the new emphasis in policy. This continued under Répiquet, Commissioner from 1934 to 1936, and in 1936 the government told the League of Nations that its "native authority" policy was based on four principles:

- (1) Respect for customs, and the need to have a middle-ranking authority so that chiefs should be "an essential cog in the administration of the territory";
- (2) A dual obligation of chiefs, to inform the government of the people's needs and wishes, and to inform the people of the government's advice and orders;
- (3) A consistent aim of increasing chiefs' authority and helping them act as "guides, advisers and leaders," but also controlling them and if necessary restraining abuses by them;
- (4) An open-minded approach to hierarchy except for attention to tradition; on this principle no new chiefly authorities would be created.¹⁰⁸

107. Circular of 31 Dec. 1933, JOC 1 Jan. 1934.

108. Annual Report 1936, p.42.

In Douala an exception was made to the new policy in the non-traditional chieftancies and, from 1933, Paramount Chieftancies of the Strangers. But the chieftancy Arrê[^]té of 4 Feb. 1933 ended, among the Dualas, the untraditional higher status given (but perhaps with little effect) to the Akwa ruler for many years.

For seven years after the dismissal of Eyoum Ekwalla of Deido no Duala paramount chief was sacked. Lobe Bell and Betote Akwa were to retain their posts for 20 years (Betote Akwa for 44) after 1932, and to be outstanding figures among the Dualas. The French encouraged chiefs and others to act as interpreters between them and the people; among the others were the miemba described above and one businessman, Doumbe Edimo, who in 1935 was decorated for his "ardour" in defending African interests in the Chamber of Commerce of which he was a member.¹⁰⁹ Signs of favour to the chiefs included the Mérite awarded to Lobe Bell in 1934, for "giving satisfaction" among other things, and to Mbappe Bwanga for his plantations, also in 1934; and the appointment of Lobe Bell to the Chamber of Commerce, as a planter, in 1935. From 1934 regular meetings between chiefs and other Africans and French officials were organised to explain policy, with the aid of film shows.¹¹⁰

109. JOC 15 Jan. 1935

110. PMC, Report of 38th session (2-12 Sept. 1939). A report (by Paraiso) of the one of the first meetings appeared in L'Eveil des Camerouniens 10 Nov. 1934.

Most remarkably, the memory of two recent Kings and heroes of the Dualas was revived with full official blessing in 1935.

On 8 March 1935 the remains of Rudolf Duala Manga Bell were re-interred behind his old house at Bonanjo, La Pagode; Michel attended the ceremony,¹¹¹ and this was not an empty gesture at all. Duala Manga was a symbol of resistance, remembered above all as a martyr in the cause of the Bell land; for the government's main representative in Douala to attend what must have been a very emotional occasion at his reburial showed a really positive attitude to tradition, especially as it was just a few days after the rejection of the claim by Rudolf's heir to land he had bequeathed in 1914. A year later, on 8 August 1936 (the 22nd anniversary of the execution), an Obelisk to the memory of Duala Manga was inaugurated by the tomb.

In March 1935 a monument to Tete Dika Mpondo, "King Akwa", was inaugurated in Akwa with a speech by his son Betote Akwa.¹¹² The aim of these ceremonies, of course, was to enlist traditional sentiments on the side of the French.

The policy was not applied only to the dead. The authorities began about 1934 to cultivate Prince Alexandre Douala Manga Bell. In 1934 he was appointed a full member of the Administrative Council for French Cameroun, with N'doumbe Mousinga, a less well-known pro-French Duala, appointed as an alternate member. And, despite the annoyance which the government must have felt at his action for recovery

111. L'Eveil des Camerouniens 25 Feb. 1935

112. Jumwele la Bana ba Kamerun 25 March 1935

of his land, Michel attended the celebrations of the prince's birthday, as noted earlier; the government obviously did not mind him being considered as "the young monarch" as the press report (in an officially-approved newspaper, by the loyal government official Michel Epee) called him. But it kept on Lobe Bell as paramount chief. The French may have found it useful to have the two strings to their bow among the Bells. These two and Betote Akwa were the three chiefly pillars of French rule in Douala in the 1930s. All three, incidentally, were German-educated.

On 20 April 1935 Prince Alexandre gave a farewell speech before the Conseil de Notables to M. Michel, proceeding on transfer; he must have thought more of the recent attendance of Michel at his father's reburial than of the loss of his court case, for his loyalty overflowed; he said that people, formerly dreaming of the past "by an inexplicable spirit of contradiction," now understood, thanks to Michel's work, that the future would be best assured in France's hands.¹¹³

René Leroi had been appointed on 11 March 1935 to succeed Michel as Chef de Circonscription. But on 8 April 1935 all the Circonscriptions of French Cameroun were renamed Regions. The borders were unchanged but the names were changed to those of mountains and rivers. Thus Douala Circonscription became the Wouri Region, headed by a Chef de Région, at first

113. Jumwele la Bana ba Kamerun 5 May 1935.

Leroi. There was still only one Subdivision, Douala Subdivision, covering the whole Region; the Chef de Subdivision dealt with many urban affairs. A separate municipal government was not to come until 1941.

Conclusions

Nothing of decisive importance happened in 1936 in Douala to make that date a watershed. But many developments after then marked some change from what had gone before. For that reason, and because those new developments require more research than was possible for this thesis, the present study is stopped at the, admittedly arbitrary, date of 1936.

Over much of colonial Africa new political activity started in the later 1930s. This was due very much to the emergence of new educated leaders. In the French empire an additional factor was the coming of the Popular Front to power in 1936. The liberalising of colonialism by the short-lived left-wing government was distinctly limited, but it had some effects in North Africa and Senegal. In French Cameroun events took a different and indeed unique course.

The growing confrontation between Nazi Germany and France led to increased concern among Frenchmen about the movement for restoration of the former German colonies, which was actually discussed between the two countries at one point and often unofficially aired. In Douala the further fear of African support for such a transfer, which had always been present, increased, and this led directly to an unusual attitude among the local French administrators and residents to the political initiatives of the younger, French-educated

generation. While officials in France showed a fairly conciliatory (though suspicious) attitude to the Camerounian - mainly Duala - students there who formed the first small new organisations after 1936, the administration and French settlers in Douala encouraged in 1938 the new Jeunesse Camerounaise Francaise (Jeucafra), founded by Paul Soppo Priso to uphold French rule and oppose the German claims.

Official backing for that organisation (shown in a mammoth demonstration in January 1939) went so far as to amount to official sponsorship. But Jeucafra was an African organisation, on quite a large scale, and, being able to operate because of the coincidence of interests between it and the French, it was to become the nucleus of the nationalist movement whose great expansion was to start in 1944. Full research into archives is needed to study the full story of Jeucafra and of the events of the Second World War, when French Cameroun emerged into prominence in 1940 as one of the French territories occupied at an early stage by de Gaulle. The later developments have been studied by many scholars including, notably, Dr. Richard Joseph in his thesis published as Radical Nationalism in Cameroun (1977).

The events of the War in Douala were momentous and merit study on their own. They included the grim sequel to the Free French occupation. Many members of the class which had been at the core of opposition for twenty-five years - the planters and other self-employed elite Dualas employed or educated by the Germans before 1914 - and which in the 1930s had been feared as a purely "pro-German" seditious group, were rounded up in 1941; Theodor Dikongue Meetom was shot as a spy,

his cousin Edinguele Meetom and many others were imprisoned for long periods after conviction for "pro-German" activity which almost certainly amounted to nothing serious. At the same time the planters, who included these activists but very many others of the Duala elite besides, were permanently ruined in 1940-41 by the war. Their plantations were never to be revived.

If these important, indeed traumatic events affecting the Dualas in 1940-41 could be included with full documentation, that would be a good point at which to halt this account. The required study of those events was not possible for the present thesis. The study therefore ends with the city expanding commercially, politically as quiescent as it ever was under the seemingly triumphant colonialism of the early 1930s, while the Duala elite was already in decline in some ways.

The Dualas' plantations were still important in the later 1930s, but their share of export crop production for French Cameroun was much reduced. By then, too, many accounts agree (but research is necessary into the exact extent) that the harassment of Duala planters by European ones was becoming widespread and serious.

With the spread of education - which had been considerably delayed earlier by the change of colonial regime - the Dualas' lead in clerical occupations had been lost by the 1930s. The early leadership of Jeucafra (consisting of clerical staff almost entirely) showed that the Dualas' white-collar leadership had not quite ended. But the post-war events showed that the heyday of the Duala clerk was over.

This fact must have helped produce their relatively more submissive spirit of the Dualas before 1939. The general state of greater resignation described in this chapter was well shown by the feeble and easily suppressed opposition to the eviction of Africans, mainly the indigenous ones, from a large area of Akwa in 1937-38. Opposition was less than in the Bonanjo expropriation partly because there was no expropriation this time; the evicted owners retained their land and drew big rents from it. But that was not the only difference; the fact that the Paramount Chief (Betote Akwa) was now on the other side sufficiently indicated the changed situation - he urged his people to submit to the measure.

In the changed situation Prince Alexandre Manga Bell (1897-1966), more than the other two of the chiefly triumvirate mentioned above, had a special role. His victory in his land case (though the French somehow managed to delay actually giving him the land back until 1944) and other incidents in 1937 made him the object of Duala admiration and French annoyance. But his application for French citizenship was granted in 1939. He may have had more local power in those years than ever before, or after, however prominent he was to be afterwards as a Deputy in the French parliament.

Douala by then did not only mean the Dualas. Politically the Strangers had always been suppressed and still were; their day was to come in 1944-45. In commerce, the present prominence (outside white-dominated economic sectors) of the non-Duala Africans was in sight by the late 1930s, with the Bamilekes taking over more and more African commercial activity.

The influx of Strangers was a major event of the twenty years covered by this study. It was spontaneous, contrary to government direction rather than following it, and it was one of many signs than African urban development was only partly dependent on colonial government policy.

That conclusion is the most important one suggested by this history of Douala under the Mandate. The history of the Dualas illustrates it most of all; their positive response to the possibilities provided by the colonial set-up has been sufficiently stressed. The Dualas in their seeking of education and clerical employment, their plantations and timber concessions, their commercial activity, their jealous efforts to keep and make use of their ancestral land; and the Strangers in their migration and their evasion of influx control, all made spontaneous, concerted efforts to maintain or better their positions by exploiting the possibilities of the colonial situation, with considerable success.

Of course the possibilities were bounded by French government policy and still more by the international trading system, on which a seaport like Douala depended. But all human lives everywhere are bound by such factors. In colonial Africa there was room for manoeuvre for Africans; their role was not everywhere that of mere victim. It could, indeed, be that in some rural areas, notably in the atrocious conditions of French Equatorial Africa, to name an example near Cameroun. In other rural areas, too, people were under a tight grip, in British and Belgian territories as well as the French ones where that grip was particularly vice-like with the Indigénat, the forced cultivation, the compulsory cooperatives (Sociétés

Indigènes de Prévoyance, extended in the 1930s to Cameroun), and the policemen disguised as chiefs such as, notably, Charles Atangana of the Betis of Cameroun. If one contrasts that situation with the life of Africans under colonial rule in Lagos, Freetown, or Douala, one sees that in Africa, as elsewhere, "town air makes a man free" - relatively,*

This freedom was expressed in political protest activity which was common in coastal West African cities in the inter-war period, particularly in the 1920s. This thesis has added a chapter to the history that early West Coast anti-colonialism, for there had been almost no studies of the protests of the Dualas. The Dualas' early nationalism had its distinctive features, such as the feelings centred on the Treaty of 1884. It also had much in common with that of other coastal West Africans. As in Lagos, Porto Novo, Cape Coast and Freetown, the relatively free political activity can only be understood against a background of greater general freedom for Africans able to take advantage of the colonial situation and escape much of the repression which fell upon most Africans. Why colonial rulers (all of them, except for the Portuguese, and even including them before 1928) respected the elites more and treated them better than other Africans is

* The evidence of failure of "influx control" is made more credible by the account of Buell (op.cit., Vol.II, p.563) of such a failure, at the same time, in Kinshasa - Léopoldville under the Belgians, with their obsession for regimentation.

a question this thesis cannot claim to have answered. But it is a certain fact - the words about the worthiness of docile village dwellers and the uselessness of protesting Coastal clerks and lawyers were not matched by deeds, in Douala or elsewhere.

That is one general fact about colonial rule suggested by this study. There are others, also, which emerge from a thesis which is not primarily a study of colonial administration. The French aversion to chiefs was clearly shown in Douala, but their efforts to reduce the chiefs' power, and to reduce the predominance of Dualas over other tribes, could not succeed completely. One reason was certainly that the French were only present for the second and third generations of colonial rule. Thirty years of German rule had profound effects; the Dualas could not be so malleable after those thirty years and the subsequent change of ruler. When the French blamed memories of past German rule and continued German influence for Duala dissidence, they were coming near the truth. Their acquisition of European culture which was not French may have increased in the Dualas' case the normal gap between elite Africans and colonial rulers, but comparison with other coastal areas makes this doubtful. What is more likely is that the main changes of the colonial era had already gone so far in the German period that the French could not act as if the Germans had not been there. The resilience of traditional chieftancy among the Dualas can be explained in this way.

The question of how far the League of Nations Mandate status and the supervision by the Mandates Commission

moderated colonial government (apart from the known effects of which the most important was the absence of military conscription) is not answerable from the example of Douala. Against the evidence of a moderating effect due to that cause, other factors can be found to explain all cases of mild (by colonial standards) treatment of Africans in Douala; in particular, the general milder treatment of coastal elite peoples, and the formative previous generation of German rule, whose impact may have limited French policy more than the Mandate status which arose from the former German rule. But whatever the explanation, one fact is clear: the people were not as clay in their rulers' hands. The Africans as well as their rulers made history in Douala under the Mandate.

APPENDIXTHE WOURI REGION FOOD AND INCOME SURVEY, 1938

The Popular Front government of France set up, under a resolution of the National Assembly on 30 Jan. 1937, a Commission of Inquiry into the "needs and legitimate aspirations of the populations inhabiting the colonies, protectorates and Mandated Territories". The Commission, headed by the ex-Minister Henri Guernut, appointed two sub-commissions, whose secretaries-general were Henri Labouret (the anthropologist) and André Touzet, to investigate the diets of (among others, no doubt) the Africans of the Wouri Region of French Cameroun.

The replies* to the detailed questionnaire on crops, meal-times, dishes, etc. sent on 30 December 1937 are very detailed and interesting. They are of great importance for the whole of the Mandate period, when the only substantial change likely to have occurred was the regular inflation in food costs.

Replies were sent by European officials and by chiefs and other leading Africans in Douala. All described farming as still an important activity for the Dualas in 1938, a remarkable fact after the decades in which they had sought and found other sorts of employment. The farms included the large plantations for long devoted to cash crops at some distance from Douala, and others also. But the replies also

* Preserved in an isolated file in the ORSTOM library at Yaounde.

confirmed the general, if only partial, dependence on purchased food.

Replies by the Paramount Chiefs Lobe Bell and Betote Akwa, and by M. Angelini of the Agricultural, Scientific and Technical Departments, described the agricultural seasons in the Region. Lobe Bell said they were the dry sunny season of January to March (loe in Duala), the season of slight rain and strong gales from April to June (mingea mambu), the rains from July to September inclusive (epupa), and the dry season with little sun and plenty of fog (mesanedi ma mbu). Lobe Bell also gave a detailed agricultural calendar:

bush clearing - February, March, September

bush burning - March, September, October

soil preparation - March, October

sowing - March, April, October, November

weeding - May, December

harvest - January, February, May-August

Betote Akwa gave a more detailed calendar illustrating the variety of crops grown at various times:

March-April - sowing of maize, groundnuts, peas, pistachios,
cocoyams (macabos), potatoes** and cassava

May-June - harvest of maize, groundnuts, pistachios

July-August - harvest of peas, maize and pistachios

October - sowing of pistachios, beans and yams

January-February - harvest of beans, groundnuts and pistachios

April - harvest of yams and cocoyams

** The cocoyams are of the Xanthosoma sagittifolium sort. The "potatoes" are presumably always sweet potatoes, though the others are eaten in Douala.

Lobe Bell said women did all the work of cultivating, while men fished, traded, worked in offices, ran plantations and did other work.

Angelini said the soil was good for oil palms, groundnuts, cassava and some other crops. The average family plots in the Wouri Region, he said, covered five hectares. Lobe Bell said a woman's plot was normally of one hectare; Jacques Kuoh Moukouri, the leading Clerk-Interpreter who wrote a long reply to the questionnaire, suggested smaller plots were normal. Angelini said crop rotation and seed selection were practiced, but otherwise methods were rudimentary, with little weeding. Some people, he said, kept sheep, chickens and ducks, and, "A native Notable has in the environs of Douala a model chicken farm" (almost certainly Paraiso). Some replies suggested that men and women had separate plots. Betote Akwa said women helped each other in turn on their plots.

Cassava was agreed by all to be a vital element in African diets. Lobe Bell said it could be kept in the fields for three years and harvested every Friday for turning into miondo, the Dualas' popular cooked cassava served wrapped in the leaves. Kuoh Moukouri said cassava was also made into dough used as a starch component of main meals, called couscous; he did not explain how this dish, still popular, came to bear the name of a North African dish which is not similar at all (that in Douala is similar to fufu). Angelini said a family plot yielded after two years an average of 180 quintals of cassava. Lobe Bell noted that dried cassava flour, together with dried maize on the cob, groundnuts, dried

peas and beans, sweet potatoes, cocoyams, and smoked fish, could be eaten during the season when food was relatively short.

Then, as now, the bean or haricot of French Cameroun was the normal West African cowpea, Vigna unguiculata. Peas could have been European peas which can easily grow there, or local legumes resembling them.

Angelini's estimate of an average family plot's yield included 250 quintals of plantains, 120 of cocoyams, 10 of groundnuts and five of maize. Peas and beans, sweet potatoes, oranges, guavas and sugar cane were also important. Lobe Bell said petits pois (whatever they actually were) could be ground with palm oil or cooked with crayfish from the Wouri and palm oil, or made into bread with palm oil, salt and pepper. Beans and maize could also be made into bread. In his reply to the questionnaire Guillaume Jemba, another of the leading officials of the African civil service, said sweet potatoes came from the neighbouring Nkam Region (before 1935 Yabassi Circonscription). He also mentioned food imported from overseas, such as sardines (belolo), other tinned food, and stockfish. Betote Akwa said salt fish, dried cod and rice (all generally imported) were popular; Douala had its good supplies of local fish, however, and the replies stressed their importance - Angelini said, "The native is a great eater of fresh and smoked meat and of fish". The meat often came from the far north, so diets at Douala included a considerable amount of non-local food.

Much local food was grown by families for their own consumption; the impression is given throughout, though it is not stated, that a family normally grew some of its food.

Angelini said local food crops fed the local populations "abundantly". But Kuoh Moukouri said people sold most of their cassava and cocoyams, and the sweet potatoes except for some kept for children. Betote Akwa said people sometimes sold so much food that they had to buy some later.

Kuoh Moukouri concluded, "le Noir mange à sa faim". One of the main purposes of the inquiry was probably to find whether that was so. But the question was not answered sufficiently in the replies to the questionnaire in the Wouri Region, as they are preserved, for they contain no analysis of the starch, protein and other components of diets. The normal African meal does indeed make one feel filled up, but often without providing a properly balanced diet. This survey had none of the calorie calculations of later surveys of that sort.

But there were detailed descriptions of daily diets, with the quantity of food measured if not the calorie content. Unfortunately the Paramount Chiefs seem to have reported on meals in their own households or others of the elite, for they seem too plentiful to have been more general.

Lobe Bell gave these details of daily meals:

Breakfast	-	grilled bananas or cocoyams, <u>citronelle</u> with sugar
Lunch	-	cassava, cocoyams, fresh fish cooked with groundnuts and palm oil, dessert of bananas or avocado pears
Supper	-	rice, fresh fish cooked with tomatoes and palm oil, dessert of oranges or <u>citronelle</u> .

Smoked fish and sweet potatoes were other possible components of average daily meals. The total daily food amounted to 1.2 kg. per person, costing 15 francs per meal.

Betote Akwa gave a more modest daily menu, costing between 3 and 5 francs per meal. While the estimated cost included items often home-grown, it seems the Akwa ruler may still have been overestimating average daily eating. He said at least a quarter of a litre of palm oil was needed for a meal, and 200 grammes of fish and 25 gr. of condiments. He and Lobe Bell said meals varied little throughout the year, but Jemba said they were more irregular in the rains.

Jemba made the most painstaking effort to find the weight of food eaten. He scrupulously expressed regret that, "Because of the lack of necessary equipment (scales, weights) and of the mediocre level and variations in diet during the rainy season, we have not been able to gauge exactly the quantities of various items entering into the composition of dishes," but he did give precise figures for a well-off person (he specified this, again showing concern for precision). He listed two alternative daily diets and their costs:

(1) 1.5 kg. of cocoyams or sweet potatoes,	0.75 francs
or 2 kg. of bananas	"
1.5 litres of water	nil
150 grammes of palm oil	0.25
10 grammes of salt	0.05
400 gr. of fresh fish	1.60
0.75 litres of water	nil
350 gr. of palm oil	0.57
125 gr. of groundnuts	0.187
10 gr. of salt	0.05
5 gr. of pepper	0.03
Total cost:	3.487 francs

(2)	400 gr. of rice	0.80 francs
	1 litre of water	nil
	5 gr. of salt	0.025
	350 gr. of butcher's meat	1.40
	0.75 litres of water	nil
	250 gr. of palm oil	0.41
	125 gr. of groundnuts	0.187
	10 gr. of salt	0.05
	5 gr. of pepper	0.03
	Total cost:	2.902 francs

Laurent de Villedeuil, Assistant to the Chef de Région, thought 3 francs per day was the minimum necessary for food. This was the minimum wage in Douala in 1938.

Several replies referred to the outlying plantations. Angelini said the cash crops, cocoa and oil palms, were separated from food crops, and Lobe Bell mentioned other production besides that which was for sale to the firms; of course a good deal of the palm produce was bound to be for local trade or use. The Paramount Chief of Bell said two-thirds of the produce of Duala's plantations on the Mungo was sold at Douala market, and one third was kept for family consumption or for gifts; this is an odd statement unless the word "market" was used very vaguely. The importance of plantations, despite the problems they faced at this time (Betote Akwa mentioned a labour shortage as one), was further stressed by Kuoh Moukouri, who said some big planters had shops on their plantations and could make big profits there. And the contribution of small farms, near the urban area or even inside it, must have been very important for the poorer

families. A good deal of food was grown in the city, but the public health authorities saw this useful activity only as an aid to malaria mosquito breeding, and in 1937 a major campaign to destroy the crops around people's houses was carried out.

The rural Bassa and Bakoko villages near Douala, still then devoted to farming, were studied in the survey. Charles Ntepe, Clerk-Interpreter Third Class, said the average Bakoko meals included 5 kg. of cocoyams, 2-3 of cassava, 2 kg. of bimbola and 5 of bananas, but he did not say how many people these large quantities were to serve. Bimbola is not generally known by that name among the Bassas (of whom the Bakokos are a branch); it may have been the sort of yam called bambolo. Generally the vegetable diet of the Bassas near Douala was found to be like that of the Dualas, not surprisingly. The Bassas sold food for the town but this was not mentioned.

For the Dualas agriculture was shown to be important, but the replies referred often to the importance of wages and salaries, part of which went on food. The Dualas who answered the questionnaire all favoured continued or increased attention to agriculture. Kuoh Moukouri and Betote Akwa noted that the trend was rather against this, the former saying, "in the very near future the Dualas may be reduced to the necessity of buying European bread". Betote said wives of office workers were turning against agriculture; they tended "to abandon today the small-scale cultivation of their ancestors, because of the modernisation of habits; preparation of meals has become more delicate, there is an amalgam of condiments in native dishes, and work is arduous. Many things

are abandoned; the influx of Strangers, sometimes desirable, into the Region discourages cultivation, for the women working on it do not have much guarantee of always being able to harvest what they have sown, because of theft." This somewhat typical view of immigrants from the interior may have been based on robberies provoked by the poor living conditions of the Strangers. Betote Akwa did not mention the regulations against cultivation in the urban area as a disincentive, though it had led to the shocking destructive actions in the previous year.

How the Dualas, wage-earners and others, paid for food was shown in parts of the replies to the questionnaire which were especially devoted to Family Budgets. The cash figures there cannot be safely extended to dates much before or after 1938, because of inflation and other factors such as the 1936 devaluation of the franc. But the Family Budgets are a guide to the living standards and conditions of the important planter group in particular.

Lobe Bell gave this estimate of the income and expenditure of a well-off family with plantations:

Income:	Sales of cocoa (2 fr. per kg.)	3,000 francs
	Sales of bananas (500 fr. in all),	
	cocoyams (300), sweet potatoes	
	(150) and maize	1,050
	Sales of animals, and income from trading or craft	nil
		<hr/> 4,050
Expenditure:	Fish and other food	960
	Men's clothing	890
	Women's clothing	600
	Children's clothing	300
	House building and repairs	300
	Lighting	100
	Receptions, hospitality	100
	Church contributions (men 24, women 12, children 6)	42
	Customary expenses (gifts, sacrifices etc.)	50
	Expenses for children: education, initiation, puberty rites, marriage	15
	Taxes and other dues	120
	Miscellaneous, including pay of labour	500
		<hr/> 3,977

Betote Akwa envisaged a budget twice as large for a family, again with plantations but with no salaried income, consisting of a man of 50, his wives aged 38 and 32, and two children of 20 and 12. He estimated that they would earn 12,950 francs per year from sale of cocoa (5,000), sweet potatoes, groundnuts and coffee (not many Africans grew coffee or bananas on plantations, but Mandessi Bell had had a coffee plantation and Betote himself had a banana plantation). Clothes, he thought, would cost 6,500 francs per year - a very

high figure. He allowed 3,000 francs per year for maintenance of plantations. Generally, he said, families spent more than they earned, and "we don't know how to organise ourselves and life is hard for us."

Kuoh Moukouri's estimate resembled Betote Akwa's except that his was for a family of one husband, six wives and sixteen children. A "big farmer" at the head of such a family, he thought, could earn 12,600 francs p.a. from his sales of cocoa and other products. Angelini balanced income and expenditure for a plantation owner at 6,000 francs p.a.; he allowed 700 for imported food. Charton, the Chef de Subdivision, estimated a planter's income at 4,000 and expenditure at 3,760.

Once again the importance of Duala planters, many of whom lived entirely off their plantations, is indicated. M. Angelini also made an interesting estimate of a well-off fisherman's Family Budget, though it can hardly be as certain as it appears to be because of the freedom with which fishermen travelled around and supplemented their income by smuggling. He thought a fishing family could earn 7,800 francs p.a. from sale of fresh and smoked fish and 1,000 from sale of palm oil, palm kernels and matting; expenses, also totalling 8,800 francs, would exclude fish, but included 1,000 for other food, 400 for drinks, a strangely low figure of 400 for clothes, and large sums for two items of expenditure peculiar to fishermen: canoes and fishing equipment (1,300) and hire of rowers (1,600). Charton gave an estimate for a labourer earning 1,800 francs a year; he would spend 1,752 a year, 1,080 of it on food and only 250 on clothing.

Then there was an estimate for the class so important among the Dualas for the previous half-century, the office workers whom Betote Akwa, in his reply to the diet questionnaire, strangely called "proletarians". Jemba considered that the annual income of a leading clerk like himself, 15,000 francs p.a., would all be covered by expenses, including food (6,480), clothes for a couple and three children (4,000), and savings (2,000).

Betote Akwa's reference to common overspending is credible; it fits in with references to frequent mortgaging of houses by prominent Dualas. Extraordinary income of that sort is not covered in the replies; nor are ordinary rents, a very important addition to elite incomes. Since 1931 the higher incomes of Africans had been subject to a graded income tax, and this may have coloured the replies. Also, the estimates generally look like those of planned, rather than actual Family Budgets. But they are a guide to everyday life throughout the Mandate era.

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Johannes Sam Deido papers, Douala

Léopold Moume Etia papers, Douala

(3) Interviews

Douala:

René Douala Manga Bell	Paramount Chief of Bell since 1967
Ernest Betote Akwa	Paramount Chief of Akwa c. 1922-25, 1931-76; born 1892
Frédéric Ekwalla Essaka	Paramount Chief of Deido, 1940-77
Louis Mbappe	Paramount Chief of Bonaberi
Rodolphe Doumbe-Mouloby	Bonadoo Clan elder, historian of the Bonadoo, former clerk with business firms, working at Douala municipal museum in 1972; born 1902
Albert Mod'a Bebe Bell	Bonadoo Clan elder, cousin of former Bell Paramount Chiefs Rudolf and Richard Bell, former government schoolteacher, born 1893
Léopold Moume Etia	Former trades unionist, student of local history and author of several MSS thereon, son of clerk-interpreter Isaac Moume Etia of Deido (1889-1939); born 1913

Johannes Sam Deido	Former businessman and clerk, son of major businessman Sam Deido, student of local history, born 1893
Jacques Kuoh Moukouri	Civil servant of Akwa, a leading Duala in the African civil service under the Mandate; born 1909
Albert Mpondo Dika	Civil servant of Akwa, born 1899, employed by the Germans 1914-16 and later by the French
Pastor Paul Mbende	Baptist clergyman, son of Baptist Pastor Joseph Ngando Nsangué (died 1951), local church historian engaged in 1972 on writing a church history; of Akwa
Ferdinand Edinguele Meetom	Leading nationalist of the Mandate era, of Akwa; in hiding or exile 1931-41, then imprisoned; born 1886
Michael Epee	Former Customs officer, Bonadoo elder, born 1900
Alfred Etame Dika	Bonaberi elder, former clerk, born 1884
Moses Eka'la Pidi	Former German-employed clerk, imprisoned as "pro-German" in 1939 and 1941; of Bell
Sam Mandessi Bell	Businessman of Bell, son of famous businessman David Mandessi Bell (died 1936)
Paul Soppo Priso	Businessman and former leading politician, of Bell; born 1913
Pastor Paul Modi Din	Pastor and son of Pastor Jacob Modi Din of Bell (died 1971)

François Dika Bekombo	Civil servant of Akwa, with the Sûreté 1939-69; born 1906
Gaston Kingue Jong	Journalist of Deido, editor of <u>Mbale</u> in France 1929-30
Pastor Jean Kotto	Pastor, son of prominent Churchman Eugen Ngile
Dr. Ekwe Bell	Doctor, son of Ekwe Bell (died 1963), civil servant brother of Rudolf Bell
Silo Same Moulوبة	Civil servant of Akwa
Pastor Thomas Ekollo	Pastor of Deido, son of Pastor Joseph Ekollo
Emmanuel Mambo Manga Bell	Brother of Rudolf Duala Manga Bell
Bebe Same	Son of Duala resident in Germany 1910-58, Max Bebe Same of Bell
Benoît Mbangue	Catholic schoolteacher, son of catechist Andreas Mbangue (died 1932); born 1907
André Ngangue	Head of Douala Radio Station in 1972
Abbé Lucien Endene	Catholic priest
Rodolphe Tokoto	Former mayor of Douala, son of Chief of Bonadoumbe Alfred Tokoto Essome (died 1942)
Prince Dika Akwa (Non-Dualas:)	Historian son of Betote Akwa
Goethe George	Sierra Leonean photographer, born 1897
Paul Monthe	Bamileke businessman, President of the Cameroon Chamber of Commerce
Pierre Penda	Douala-Bassa resident, student of Bassa history

André Njo	Informed Douala-Bassa resident
Bruno Ditourou Eyoun	Douala-Bassa resident, student of Bassa history
Gabriel Libom	Old immigrant Bassa blacksmith, New Bell
Michel Ndzana	Long-established Beti immigrant in New-Bell, Catholic catechist
Jean-Claude Ninine	Lawyer from Guadeloupe, son of former colonial official (in Douala) and Deputy Jules Ninine (died 1969)
Marcel Tricou	French businessman, in Cameroon since 1920
Yaounde:	
Maurice Doumbe-Moulongo	Civil servant and historian
Daniel Amiot-Priso	(Duala) Head of Yaounde Radio Station
Paris:	
Pierre Chauleur	Former colonial official in Cameroun, Editor of <u>Marchés Tropicaux</u>
Maurice Bertaut	Former Chef de Région in Wouri Region, 1941-3; later colonial governor
Pastor Charles Maître	Protestant missionary, head of the SME mission in Douala 1919-27
Iwiye Kala-Lobe	Duala journalist, with <u>Présence Africaine</u>
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Pastor Jean Rusillon	Head of French Protestant Mission in French Cameroun, 1922 to 1938
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Mgr. Joseph Bouchaud, CSSp	Catholic missionary in Douala in the 1930s; historian of Cameroon

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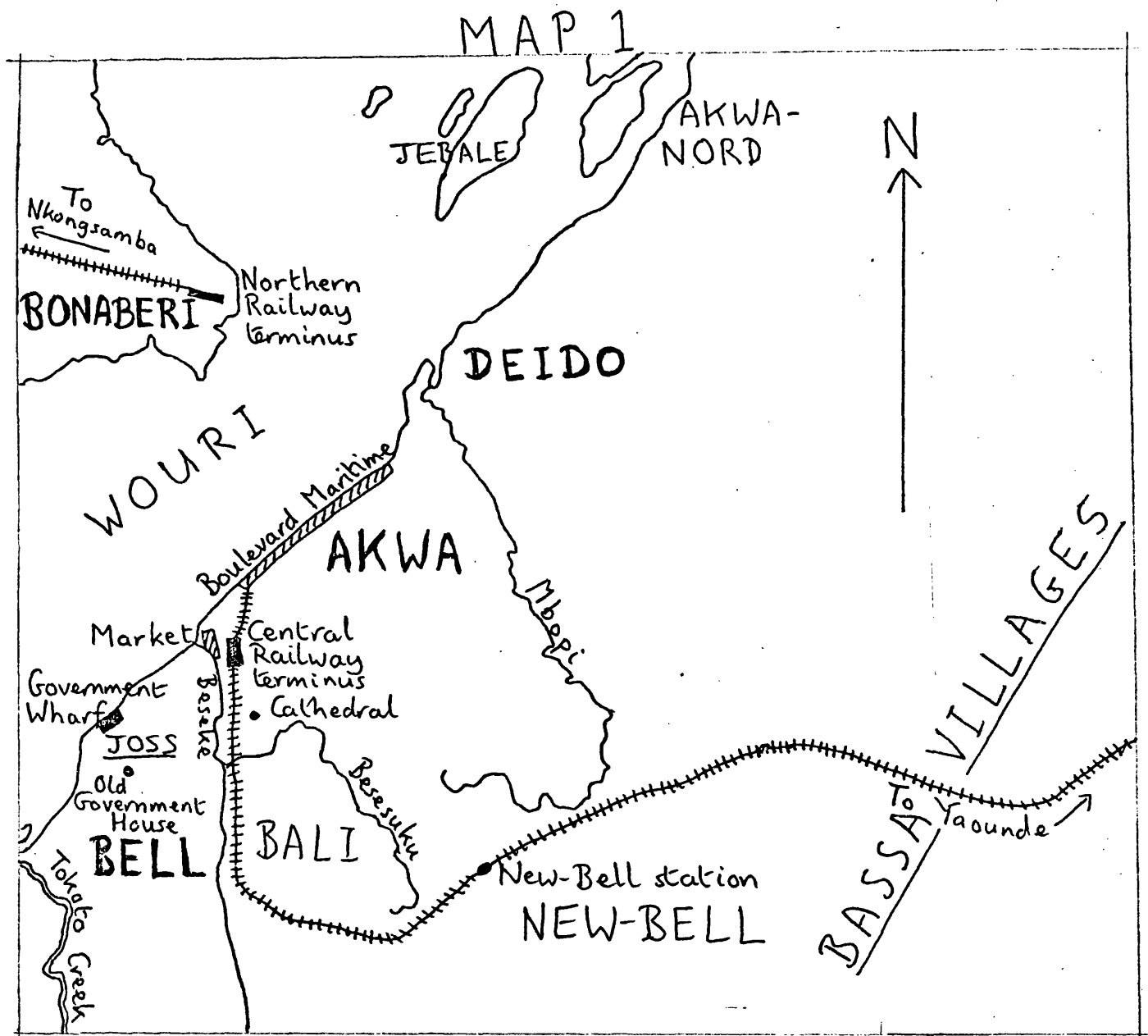
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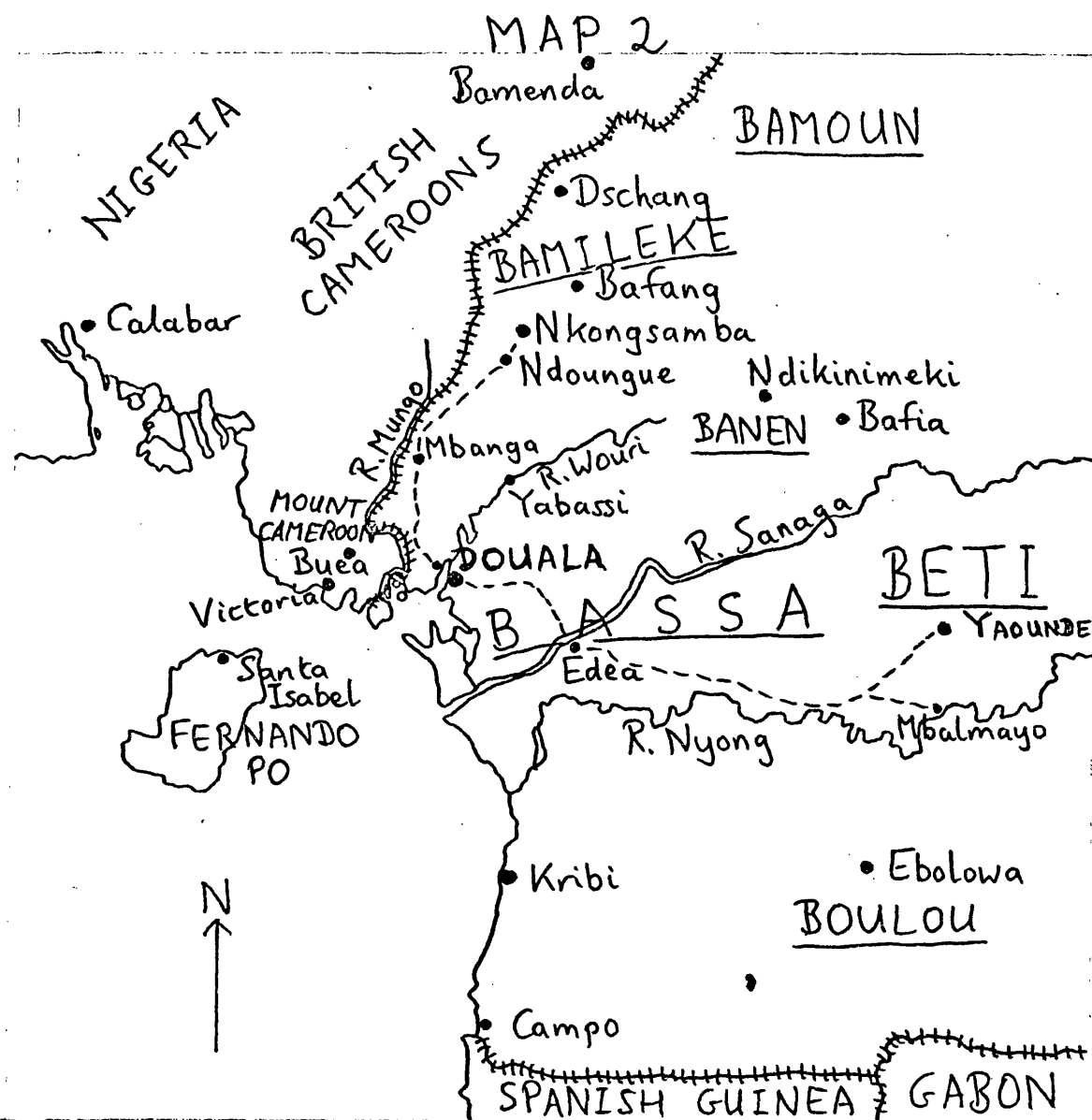


DOUALA

ca. 1936

Scale: 1 inch = 1,000 metres

- Rivers and shores
- ++++ Railways



SOUTH-WEST FRENCH CAMEROUN

Scale: 1 cm. = 30 km.

- Rivers and shores
- ++++ Inter-colony borders
- Railways

Names of ethnic groups underlined